THE WORLD'S LEADING MYSTERY MAGAZINE

ELLERY QUEEN'S Mystery Magazine

160 pages

JANUARY 28, 1981 $1.35 UK 95P

14 stories— ALL NEW

Jack Ritchie

E
H

R
Fi

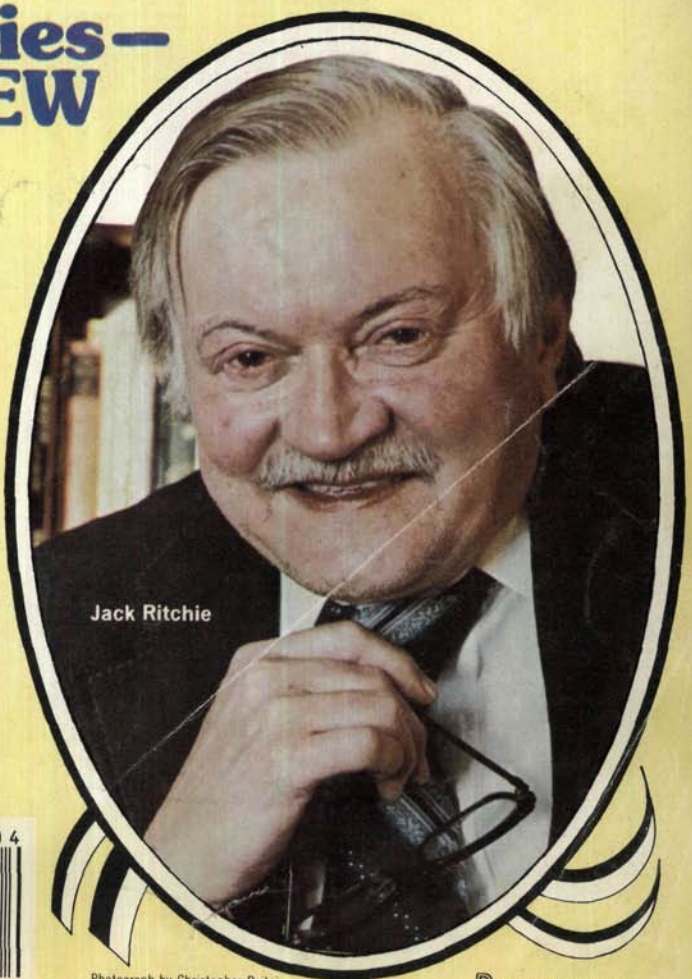
Ba
Pe

Ge **t**

Jo
Ha

an
Mystery Newsletter

27 43 4528 ROYA66TRHO2 AUG81
PROF HALSEY ROYDEN
13466 THREE FORKS
LOS ALTOS HLS CA 94022



Photograph by Christopher Reitci

A DAVIS PUBLICATION

0 71486 02057 04

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mystery Lovers—Can You Solve This?

What famous mystery magazine regularly publishes top authors like these—Edward D. Hoch, Ruth Rendell, Julian Symons, Joyce Harrington, Lawrence Treat, Stanley Ellin, Hugh Pentecost, George Baxt, Patricia McGerr, Lillian de la Torre—and more?

Clue →

What is the world's largest-selling mystery magazine—now in its 40th year of publication?

Clue →

What's one of the best values available—160 pages filled with the newest and the best—at least 12 new, never-before published stories by established favorites and rising newcomers—plus a monthly Mystery Newsletter?

Clue →

And you can have it all delivered to your home at a special money-saving introductory price.

Good Sleuths Know—Now's the Time to Subscribe to ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Just fill in below, detach and mail to

EXTRA COUPON ON PAGE 98

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine • P.O. Box 2600 • Greenwich, CT 06836

☐ Send me 7 issues of EQMM for Only $7.97!
(a savings of $1.48 off the newsstand price)

☐ Double my savings—14 issues for $15.94!

Outside U.S.A. and possessions: 7 issues $9.16 14 issues $18.33

☐ Payment of $_____enclosed. ☐ Bill me later.

☐ Charge to my ☐ VISA ☐ Master Charge

Card # ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Expiration Date:_____

Your Signature: _____

(Only the 14 Issues for $15.94 can be charged to your bank cards.)

Your name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please allow 6-8 weeks for delivery of first issue. H1ABP3

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Next Issue On Sale January 29 **ISSN: 0013-6328**

ELLERY QUEEN'S
Mystery Magazine ®

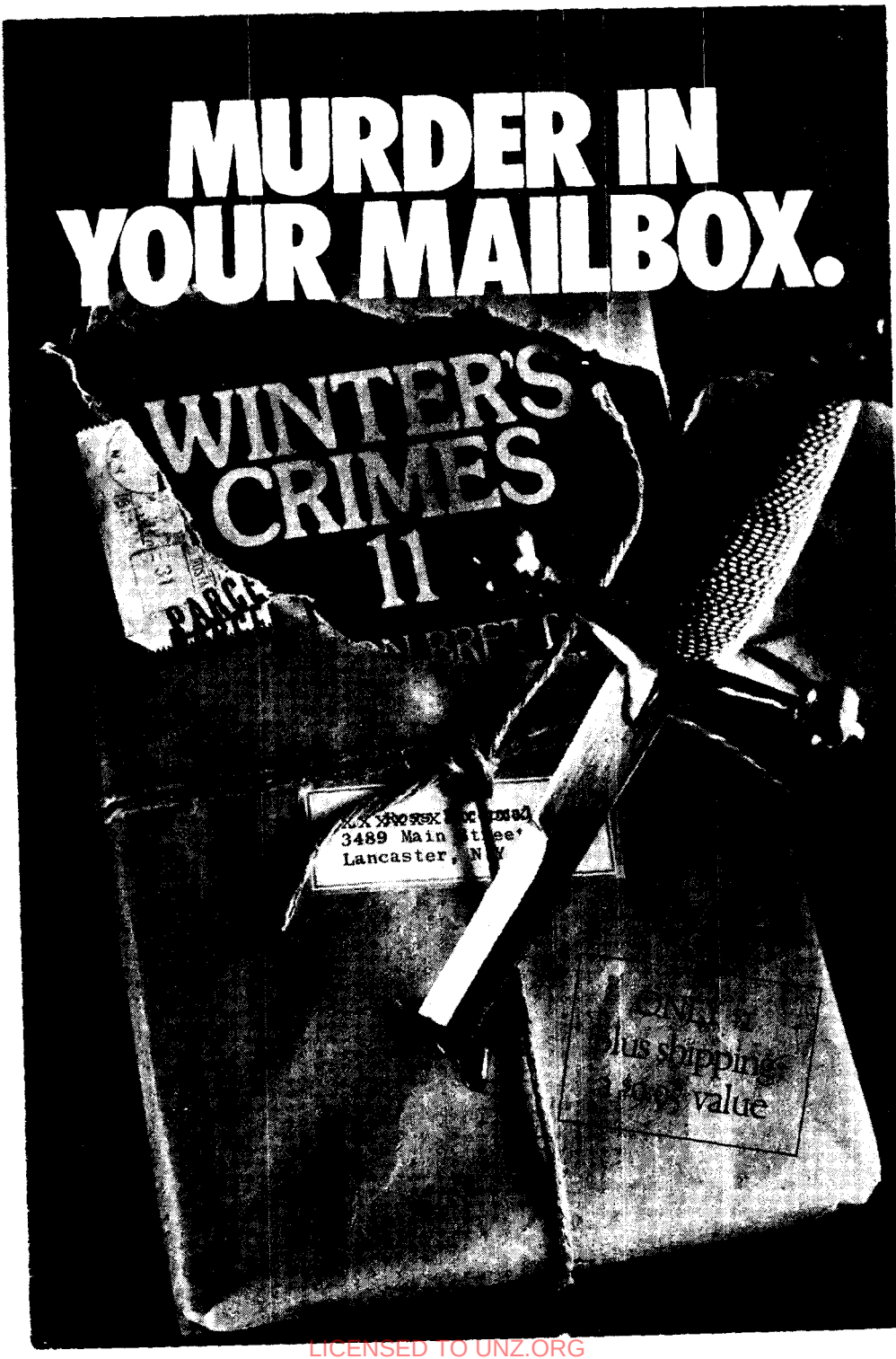
THE ABSENCE OF EMILY	Jack Ritchie	6
THE YORKSHIRE RIPPER	Mary Braund	16
THE BLACK STAIN	Henry T. Parry	26
MAYBE IT DIDN'T HAPPEN	Robert Edward Eckels	44
ADVENTURE OF THE UKRAINIAN FOUNDLING ORPHANS	Robert L. Fish	48
FATHER SHERLOCK	Aubrey Davidson	56
ADVENTURE OF THE HARE APPARENT	Hal Charles	58
THE GIRL DOWNSTAIRS	Florence V. Mayberry	59
RAFFLES AND THE BOX 4 DRAMA	Barry Perowne	70
WHATEVER WILL BECOME OF GEORGE?	Ellen Betty Brink	99
SOMETHING IS GOING TO HAPPEN	Sharon Evans	101
DISPATCHING BOOTSIE	Joyce Harrington	112
A SCHOOLTEACHER'S LOT	Clements Jordan	126
WHAT YOU BEEN UP TO LATELY?	George Baxt	135
THE PROBLEM OF THE GINGERBREAD HOUSEBOAT	Edward D. Hoch	143
MYSTERY NEWSLETTER	R. E. Porter & Chris Steinbrunner	91
THE JURY BOX	Jon L. Breen	96

PRESIDENT & PUBLISHER: *Joel Davis* **EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**: *Ellery Queen*

Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine, Vol. 77, No. 2, Whole No. 449, January 28, 1981. Published 13 times a year, every 28 days, by Davis Publications, Inc., at $1.35 a copy. Annual subscription $17.50 in U.S.A. and possessions; $19.50 elsewhere. Allow 6 to 8 weeks for change of address. Editorial and Executive Offices, 380 Lexington Ave., N.Y., N.Y. 10017. Subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to P.O. Box 2600, Greenwich, CT 06836. Controlled circulation postage paid at Dallas, PA. *© 1980 by Davis Publications, Inc., all rights reserved. Protection secured under the Universal Copyright Convention and the Pan American Copyright Convention. ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE ® is the registered trademark of Ellery Queen. Printed in U.S.A. Submission must be accompanied by stamped self-addressed envelope. The Publisher assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts.*

ELEANOR SULLIVAN, *Managing Editor*—CONSTANCE DIRIENZO, *Exec. Sec., Rts. & Perm. Mgr.* BARBARA BAZYN, — ELANA LORE, *Assistant Editors* — CAROLE DIXON, *Production Manager.* VICTOR C. STABILE, *Vice Pres. & Treas.* — LEONARD F. PINTO, *Vice Pres. & General Manager* CAROLE DOLPH GROSS, *Vice Pres., Marketing & Editorial* — CARL BARTEE, *Production Director* DON GABREE, *Newsstand Circulation Director* — JOSEPH ROWAN, *Newsstand Sales Manager* JIM CAPPELLO, *Advertising Manager* — ROSE WAYNER, *Classified Advertising Director* IRVING BERNSTEIN, *Art Dir.* — R. V. ENLOW, *Sub. Circ. Dir.* — EUGENE SLAWSON, *Asst. Sub. Circ. Dir.* B. G. DAVIS, *President, Chairman of the Board (1957-1972)*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY CLUB.

JOIN NOW AND RECEIVE THIS ACCLAIMED MYSTERY COLLECTION.

A $9.95 VALUE FOR ONLY $1.

Every other month, ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY CLUB serves up two more deliciously sinister and baffling collections written by the modern masters. You'll match wits with the likes of Rex Stout, Georges Simenon, Ross Macdonald, Erle Stanley Gardner, Ellery Queen himself and many others.

Right now, you can start off with original stories by ten of Britain's best writers, collected in WINTER'S CRIMES 11, edited by George Hardinge. Hailed as "one of the most highly regarded and valuable crime anthologies published," these stories will acquaint you with a turn of mind that's uniquely British...one you'll find refreshingly different—and frequently macabre.

You'll meet an old man with a strange, deadly obsession in DOUBLE GLAZING, written by Simon Brett. This story shows how fear can escalate into something far more dangerous than the thing feared.

You'll grasp for reality along with a young wife in NORTH WIND by Gwendoline Butler. Caught in a web of espionage and counter-espionage, she treads the fine line between reality and illusion... never knowing her husband's real assignment, what happened to an old friend, or the intentions of a new admirer who may in reality be an agent ordered to watch her every move.

You'll be repelled by the arrogance of a brilliant actor, and fascinated by his machinations as he plans the perfect crime. Then, Julian Symons shows how THE FLAW in his plan teams with fate to weave an infinitely crueler plot than the one he has devised.

You'll peer into the unbalanced mind of a sportsman whose fierce loyalty to tradition drives him to murderous vengeance. POTTERSON'S PARTICULAR by Ivor Drummond captures perfectly the British sense of irony and horror.

Enjoy these stories and six more thrillers as your introduction to ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY CLUB. This fine volume is yours for only $1, plus shipping.

2 GREAT MYSTERY ANTHOLOGIES 7 TIMES A YEAR

Look forward to 2 selections 7 times a year by prize-winning masters of mystery—featuring short stories and novelettes, whodunits, cop-and-robbers capers, cloak-and-dagger tales, suspense sagas to hold you *spellbound!*

And that's barely the beginning...

SPECIAL BENEFITS OF ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY CLUB!

•Receive your Introductory Book—WINTER'S CRIMES 11—for only $1 plus shipping! •Pay only $5.99 for subsequent selections...values to $10.99 and up! •Send no money now! •No minimum number of books to buy. Take only those you want. •7-day free examination! •Cancel any time! •Satisfaction guaranteed—or your money back. No questions asked.

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY CLUB
Roslyn, NY 11576

YES! Put a little mystery in my life! Please enroll me as a member and rush me my copy of WINTER'S CRIMES 11.

I enclose no money now. After 7 days examination, I will either keep the book and pay $1.00 plus shipping or return it. As a member, I understand I will receive advance descriptions of future books currently at $5.99 plus shipping, which is 30% or 40% off publishers' prices. I may, of course, return any book at your expense for full credit—and may cancel at any time. EQ5RJH

Mr. Mrs. Ms_____
IKA

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Note: Members accepted in U.S. and Canada only. Offer may be slightly different in Canada.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

JACK RITCHIE

Emily was visiting friends in San Francisco. Yes, she might be gone for a long time. Yes, it was true she had taken very little with her in the way of luggage. Yes, something funny was going on—which will come as no surprise to Jack Ritchie fans . . .

THE ABSENCE OF EMILY

by JACK RITCHIE

The phone rang and I picked up the receiver. "Yes?"

"Hello, darling, this is Emily."

I hesitated. "Emily who?"

She laughed lightly. "Oh, come now, darling. Emily, your wife."

"I'm sorry, you must have a wrong number." I hung up, fumbling a bit as I cradled the phone.

Millicent, Emily's cousin, had been watching me. "You look white as a sheet."

I glanced covertly at a mirror.

"I don't mean in actual *color,* Albert. I mean figuratively. In attitude. You seem frightened. Shocked."

"Nonsense."

"Who phoned?"

"It was a wrong number."

Millicent sipped her coffee. "By the way, Albert, I thought I saw Emily in town yesterday, but, of course, that was impossible."

"Of course it was impossible. Emily is in San Francisco."

"Yes, but *where* in San Francisco?"

"She didn't say. Just visiting friends."

"I've known Emily all her life. She has very few secrets from me. She doesn't *know* anybody in San Francisco. When will she be back?"

© 1980 by Jack Ritchie.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"She might be gone a rather long time."

"How long?"

"She didn't know."

Millicent smiled. "You have been married before, haven't you, Albert?"

"Yes."

"As a matter of fact, you were a widower when you met Emily?"

"I didn't try to keep that fact a secret."

"Your first wife met her death in a boating accident five years ago? She fell overboard and drowned?"

"I'm afraid so. She couldn't swim a stroke."

"Wasn't she wearing a life preserver?"

"No. She claimed they hindered her movements."

"It appears that you were the only witness to the accident."

"I believe so. At least no one else ever came forward."

"Did she leave you any money, Albert?"

"That's none of your business, Millicent."

Cynthia's estate had consisted of a fifty-thousand-dollar life-insurance policy, of which I was the sole beneficiary, some forty-thousand dollars in sundry stocks and bonds, and one small sailboat.

I stirred my coffee. "Millicent, I thought I'd give you first crack at the house."

"First crack?"

"Yes. We've decided to sell this place. It's really too big for just the two of us. We'll get something smaller. Perhaps even an apartment. I thought you might like to pick up a bargain. I'm certain we can come to satisfactory terms."

She blinked. "Emily would never sell this place. It's her home. I'd have to hear the words from her in person."

"There's no need for that. I have her power of attorney. She has no head for business, you know, but she trusts me implicitly. It's all quite legal and aboveboard."

"I'll think it over." She put down her cup. "Albert, what did you do for a living before you met Emily? Or Cynthia, for that matter?"

"I managed."

When Millicent was gone, I went for my walk on the back grounds of the estate. I went once again to the dell and sat down on the fallen log. How peaceful it was here. Quiet. A place to rest. I had been coming here often in the last few days.

Millicent and Emily. Cousins. They occupied almost identical large homes on spacious grounds next to each other. And, consid-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ering that fact, one might reasonably have supposed that they were equally wealthy. Such, however, was not the case, as I discovered after my marriage to Emily.

Millicent's holdings must certainly reach far into seven figures, since they require the full-time administrative services of Amos Eberly, her attorney and financial advisor.

Emily, on the other hand, owned very little more than the house and the grounds themselves and she had borrowed heavily to keep them going. She had been reduced to two servants, the Brewsters. Mrs. Brewster, a surly creature, did the cooking and desultory dusting, while her husband, formerly the butler, had been reduced to a man-of-all-work, who pottered inadequately about the grounds. The place really required the services of two gardeners.

Millicent and Emily. Cousins. Yet it was difficult to imagine two people more dissimilar in either appearance or nature.

Millicent is rather tall, spare, and determined. She fancies herself an intellect and she has the tendency to rule and dominate all those about her, and that had certainly included Emily. It is obvious to me that Millicent deeply resents the fact that I removed Emily from under her thumb.

Emily. Shorter than average. Perhaps twenty-five pounds overweight. An amiable disposition. No claim to blazing intelligence. Easily dominated, yes, though she had a surprising stubborn streak when she set her mind to something.

When I returned to the house, I found Amos Eberly waiting. He is a man in his fifties and partial to gray suits.

"Where is Emily?" he asked.

"In Oakland." He gave that thought.

"I meant San Francisco. Oakland is just across the bay, isn't it? I usually think of them as one, which, I suppose, is unfair to both."

He frowned. "San Francisco? But I saw her in town just this morning. She was looking quite well."

"Impossible."

"Impossible for her to be looking well?"

"Impossible for you to have seen her. She is still in San Francisco."

He sipped his drink. "I know Emily when I see her. She wore a lilac dress with a belt. And a sort of gauzy light-blue scarf."

"You were mistaken. Besides, women don't wear gauzy light-blue scarves these days."

"Emily did. Couldn't she have come back without letting you know?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No."

Eberly studied me. "Are you ill or something, Albert? Your hands seem to be shaking."

"Touch of the flu," I said quickly. "Brings out the jitters in me. What brings you here anyway, Amos?"

"Nothing in particular, Albert. I just happened to be in the neighborhood and thought I'd drop in and see Emily."

"Damn it, I told you she isn't here."

"All right, Albert," he said soothingly. "Why should I doubt you? If you say she isn't here, she isn't here."

It has become my habit on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons to do the household food shopping, a task which I pre-empted from Mrs. Brewster when I began to suspect her arithmetic.

As usual, I parked in the supermarket lot and locked the car. When I looked up, I saw a small, slightly stout woman across the street walking toward the farther end of the block. She wore a lilac dress and a light-blue scarf. It was the fourth time I'd seen her in the last ten days.

I hurried across the street. I was still some seventy-five yards behind her when she turned the corner.

Resisting the temptation to shout at her to stop, I broke into a trot.

When I reached the corner, she was nowhere in sight. She could have disappeared into any one of a dozen shop fronts.

I stood there, trying to regain my breath, when a car pulled to the curb.

It was Millicent. "Is that you, Albert?"

I regarded her without enthusiasm. "Yes."

"What in the world are you doing? I saw you running and I've never seen you run before."

"I was *not* running. I was merely trotting to get my blood circulating. A bit of jogging is supposed to be healthy, you know."

I volunteered my adieu and strode back to the supermarket.

The next morning when I returned from my walk to the dell, I found Millicent in the drawing room, pouring herself coffee and otherwise making herself at home—a habit from the days when only Emily occupied the house.

"I've been upstairs looking over Emily's wardrobe," Millicent said. "I didn't see anything missing."

"Why should anything be missing? Has there been a thief in the house? I suppose you know every bit and parcel of her wardrobe?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Not every bit and parcel, but almost. Almost. And very little, if anything, seems to be missing. Don't tell me that Emily went off to San Francisco without any luggage."

"She had luggage. Though not very much."

"What was she wearing when she left?"

Millicent had asked that question before. This time I said, "I don't remember."

Millicent raised an eyebrow. "You don't remember?" She put down her cup. "Albert, I'm holding a seance at my place tonight. I thought perhaps you'd like to come."

"I will not go to any damn seance."

"Don't you want to communicate with any of your beloved dead?"

"I believe in letting the dead rest. Why bother them with every trifling matter back here."

"Wouldn't you want to speak to your first wife?"

"Why the devil would I want to communicate with Cynthia? I have absolutely nothing to say to her anyway."

"But perhaps she has something to say to you."

I wiped my forehead. "I'm not going to your stupid seance and that's final."

That evening, as I prepared for bed, I surveyed the contents of Emily's closet. How would I dispose of her clothes? Probably donate them to some worthy charity, I thought.

I was awakened at two A.M. by the sound of music.

I listened. Yes, it was plainly Emily's favorite sonata being played on the piano downstairs.

I stepped into my slippers and donned my dressing robe. In the hall, I snapped on the lights.

I was halfway down the stairs when the piano-playing ceased. I completed my descent and stopped at the music room doors. I put my ear to one of them. Nothing. I slowly opened the door and peered inside.

There was no one at the piano. However, two candles in holders flickered on its top. The room seemed chilly. Quite chilly.

I found the source of the draft behind some drapes and closed the French doors to the terrace. I snuffed out the candles and left the room.

I met Brewster at the head of the stairs.

"I thought I heard a piano being played, sir," he said. "Was that you?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I wiped the palms of my hands on my robe. "Of course."

"I didn't know you played the piano, sir."

"Brewster, there are a lot of things you don't know about me and never will."

I went back to my room, waited half an hour, and then dressed. In the bright moonlight outside, I made my way to the garden shed. I unbolted its door, switched on the lights, and surveyed the gardening equipment. My eyes went to the tools in the wall racks.

I pulled down a long-handled irrigating shovel and knocked a bit of dried mud from its tip. I slung the implement over my shoulder and began walking toward the dell.

I was nearly there when I stopped and sighed heavily. I shook my head and returned to the shed. I put the shovel back into its place on the rack, switched off the lights, and returned to bed.

The next morning, Millicent dropped in as I was having breakfast.

"How are you this morning, Albert?"

"I have felt better."

Millicent sat down at the table and waited for Mrs. Brewster to bring her a cup.

Mrs. Brewster also brought the morning mail. It included a number of advertising fliers, a few bills, and one small blue envelope addressed to me.

I examined it. The handwriting seemed familiar and so did the scent. The postmark was town.

I slit open the envelope and pulled out a single sheet of notepaper.

Dear Albert:

You have no idea how much I miss you. I shall return home soon, Albert. Soon.

Emily

I put the note back into the envelope and slipped both into my pocket.

"Well?" Millicent asked.

"Well, what?"

"I thought I recognized Emily's handwriting on the envelope. Did she say when she'd be back?"

"That is *not* Emily's handwriting. It is a note from my aunt in Chicago."

"I didn't know you had an aunt in Chicago."

"Millicent, rest assured. I *do* have an aunt in Chicago."

That night I was in bed, but awake, when the phone on my night table rang. I picked up the receiver.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Hello, darling. This is Emily."

I let five seconds pass. "You are *not* Emily. You are an impostor."

"Now, Albert, why are you being so stubborn? Of course this is me. Emily."

"You couldn't be."

"Why couldn't I be?"

"*Because.*"

"Because why?"

"Where are you calling from?"

She laughed. "I think you'd be surprised."

"You couldn't be Emily. I *know* where she is and she couldn't—*wouldn't*—make a phone call at this hour of the night just to say hello. It's well past midnight."

"You think you know where I am, Albert? No, I'm not there any more. It was so uncomfortable, so dreadfully uncomfortable. And so I left, Albert. I left."

I raised my voice. "Damn you, I can *prove* you're still there."

She laughed. "Prove? How can you prove anything like that, Albert? Good night." She hung up.

I got out of bed and dressed. I made my way downstairs and detoured into the study. I made myself a drink, consumed it slowly, and then made another.

When I consulted my watch for the last time it was nearly one A.M. I put on a light jacket against the chill of the night and made my way to the garden shed. I opened the doors, turned on the lights, and pulled the long-handled shovel from the rack.

This time I went all the way to the dell. I paused beside a huge oak and stared at the moonlit clearing.

I counted as I began pacing. "One, two, three, four—" I stopped at sixteen, turned ninety degrees, and then paced off eighteen more steps.

I began digging.

I had been at it for nearly five minutes when suddenly I heard the piercing blast of a whistle and immediately I became the focus of perhaps a dozen flashlight beams and approaching voices.

I shielded my eyes against the glare and recognized Millicent. "What the devil is this?"

She showed cruel teeth. "You had to make sure she was really dead, didn't you, Albert? And the only way you could do that was to return to her grave."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I drew myself up. "I am looking for Indian arrowheads. There's an ancient superstition that if one is found under the light of the moon it will bring luck for the finder for several weeks."

Millicent introduced the people gathered about me. "Ever since I began suspecting what really has happened to Emily you've been under twenty-four-hour surveillance by private detectives."

She indicated the others. "Miss Peters. She is quite a clever mimic and was the voice of Emily you heard over the phone. She also plays piano. And Mrs. McMillan. She reproduced Emily's handwriting and was the woman in the lilac dress and the blue scarf."

Millicent's entire household staff seemed to be present. I also recognized Amos Eberly and the Brewsters. I would fire them tomorrow.

The detectives had brought along their own shovels and spades, and two of them superseded me in my shallow depression. They began digging.

"See here," I said, exhibiting indignation. "You have no right to do that. This is *my* property. At the very least you need a search warrant."

Millicent found that amusing. "This is *not* your property, Albert. It is *mine*. You stepped over the dividing line six paces back."

I wiped my forehead. "I'm going back to the house."

"You are under arrest, Albert."

"Nonsense, Millicent. I do not see a *proper* uniformed policeman among these people. And in this state private detectives do not have the right to arrest anyone at all."

For a moment she seemed stymied, but then saw light. "You are under *citizen's* arrest, Albert. Any citizen has the power to make a citizen's arrest and I am a citizen."

Millicent twirled the whistle on its chain. "We knew we were getting to you, Albert. You almost dug her up last night, didn't you? But then you changed your mind. But that was just as well. Last night I couldn't have produced as many witnesses. Tonight we were ready and waiting."

The detectives dug for some fifteen minutes and then paused for a rest. One of them frowned. "You'd think the digging would be easier. This ground looks like it's never been dug up before."

They resumed their work and eventually reached a depth of six feet before they gave up. The spade man climbed out of the excavation. "Hell, nothing's been buried here. The only thing we found was an Indian arrowhead."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Millicent had been glaring at me for the last half hour.

I smiled. "Millicent, what makes you think that I *buried* Emily?"

With that I left them and returned to the house.

When had I first become aware of Millicent's magnificent maneuverings and the twenty-four-hour surveillance? Almost from the very beginning, I suspect. I'm rather quick on the uptake.

What had been Millicent's objective? I suppose she envisioned reducing me to such a state of fear that eventually I'd break down and confess to the murder of Emily.

Frankly, I would have regarded the success of such a scheme as farfetched, to say the least. However, once I was aware of what Millicent was attempting, I got into the spirit of the venture.

Millicent may have initiated the enterprise, the play, but it is I who led her to the dell.

There were times when I thought I overdid it just a bit—wiping at nonexistent perspiration, trotting after the elusive woman in the lilac dress, that sort of thing—but on the other hand I suppose these reactions were rather expected of me and I didn't want to disappoint any eager watchers.

Those brooding trips to the dell had been quite a good touch, I thought. And the previous night's halfway journey there, with the shovel over my shoulder, had been intended to assure a large audience at the finale twenty-four hours later.

I had counted eighteen witnesses, excluding Millicent.

I pondered. Defamation of character? Slander? Conspiracy? False arrest? Probably a good deal more.

I would threaten to sue for a large and unrealistic amount. That was the fashion nowadays, wasn't it? Twenty million? It didn't really matter, of course, because I doubted very much if the matter would ever reach court.

No, Millicent wouldn't be able to endure the publicity. She couldn't let the world know what a total fool she'd made of herself. She couldn't bear to be the laughingstock of her circle, her peers.

She would, of course, attempt to hush it up as best she could. A few dollars here and a few there to buy the silence of the witnesses. But could one seriously hope to buy the total silence of eighteen individual people? Probably not. However, when the whispers began to circulate, it would be a considerable help to Millicent if the principal player involved would join her in vehemently denying that any such ridiculous event had ever taken place at all.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And I would do that for Millicent. For a consideration. A *large* consideration.

At the end of the week, my phone rang.

"This is Emily. I'm coming home now, dear."

"Wonderful."

"Did anyone miss me?"

"You have no idea."

"You haven't told anyone where I've been these last four weeks, have you, Albert? Especially not Millicent?"

"Especially not Millicent."

"What *did* you tell her?"

"I said you were visiting friends in San Francisco."

"Oh, dear. I don't *know* anybody in San Francisco. Do you suppose she got suspicious?"

"Well, maybe just a little bit."

"She thinks I have absolutely no will power, but I really have. But just the same, I didn't want her laughing at me if I didn't stick it out. Oh, I suppose going to a health farm is cheating, in a way. I mean you can't be tempted because they control all of the food. But I really stuck it out. I could have come home any time I wanted to."

"You have marvelous will power, Emily."

"I've lost *thirty* pounds, Albert! And it's going to *stay* off. I'll bet I'm every bit as slim now as Cynthia ever was."

I sighed. There was absolutely no reason for Emily to keep comparing herself to my first wife. The two of them are separate entities and each has her secure compartment in my affections.

Poor Cynthia. She had insisted on going off by herself in that small craft. I had been at the yacht-club window sipping a martini and watching the cold gray harbor.

Cynthia's boat seemed to have been the only one on the water on that inhospitable day and there had apparently been an unexpected gust of wind. I had seen the boat heel over sharply and Cynthia thrown overboard. I'd raised the alarm immediately, but by the time we got out there it had been too late.

Emily sighed too. "I suppose I'll have to get an entire new wardrobe. Do you think we can really afford one, Albert?"

We could now. And then some.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He was a harmless-looking man, one you would never notice in a crowd. Except for his eyes . . .

THE YORKSHIRE RIPPER

by MARY BRAUND

As in everything else, chance played a significant part in the whole business. Life is like that; if one had taken a different turning; if the stranger on the bus had not spoken; if one's father had married another woman . . . But for Ginny, chance turned into a frightening and, in the end, fatal affair. If they had not been fellow compatriots, if she had not heard that broadcast, if he had not walked casually into the shop that day . . .

Ginny ran an antique shop. She had gone into the trade for one main reason—Ginny was English and she loved the feel and look of old furniture, soft and gleaming with the patina of centuries; she loved the style and craftsmanship of exquisite, unusual pieces that could not be found out on the West Coast. It was also a marvelous excuse to take periodic trips back to England to search for more antiques, because Ginny had never quite shaken off her Englishness. And because Ginny liked people and things, another bonus was the way unknown folk wandered in with interesting things to show her, for appraisal or for sale as the need and fancy took them.

Which is how Harold Dawson arrived at the shop one day. He came in through the door hesitantly, sidling in, faintly furtive, a worried, anxious look in his light blue eyes. The eyes were striking, pale, round with a black circle to the iris and a fringe of dark lashes. Odd eyes. The rest of him was nondescript, his face scrubbed and fresh, his hair dark and slicked down, flattened on his forehead; he had a soft pudgy body. A harmless-looking man, one you would never notice in a crowd. Except for his eyes.

He clutched a large clumsily wrapped package in his arms and Ginny knew immediately that he was one of those with something to sell. They were easy to spot, the air of desperation clouding their faces, the fear of rejection drooping their shoulders. Those that came

© 1980 by Mary Braund.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to buy strode into the shop confidently, the sellers crept in.

"I've got something to show you," he said, clearing his throat, placing the bundle carefully on her desk. "I was wondering if you'd be interested in buying this," and the sound of his voice made Ginny smile, changing her expression from the businesslike, ready to bargain the price down, "thank you for the offer, but no, thank you" look that she tried to cultivate.

"You're from Yorkshire!" she said, tickled to have a fellow countryman walk in through the door, here in this part of the world where they were so few and far between.

"Why, yes," he said. "How on earth did you know?" with a Yorkshire accent you could cut with a knife.

"I'm English myself," she explained. "And I lived in the north of England for a few years. Sheffield."

"Oh, aye? I haven't met any others from England here. You don't expect to find them in this neck of the woods." He looked at her with those pale eyes. "How long have you been here then?"

He had a slight stammer.

"Oh, ages and ages," Ginny said. "Ten years it must be now. Which part of Yorkshire are you from?"

There had been a time when she could have placed his accent within a few miles, but her ear was getting rusty, no longer able to pinpoint with accuracy the subtle variations of the distinct dialects.

"Oh, Leeds," he said vaguely. He looked around the shop. "You've got some nice things here. Where do you get them from?"

"Here and there," Ginny said. She touched the brown-paper parcel. "What have you got to show me?"

"You don't go back to England to buy then?" He looked uneasy, reluctant to unwrap his offering.

"It's got so expensive in England now," she replied. She didn't feel like launching into a description of her last trip in the spring when it had been so difficult to buy, the weather so cold, the whole trip complicated by family matters in England.

He seemed to relax a little. "Aye, it's expensive in England now. I brought some antiques with me and now I really need the money but the dealers here won't offer me anything like I'd have got at home. I should have sold everything before I came, but it was a bit of a rush . . ." His voice trailed away. "Like this clock, for instance," and his fingers, thick and fumbling, started at last to unwrap the bundle.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The layers of paper came off, revealing a tall ornate brass clock, convoluted in design, overdecorated, gothic. Ginny looked at it with dismay.

"It's not English," she said.

"It's German. Very well made. I could have got six or seven hundred dollars for it back home. That fellow down the road offered me just one hundred for it. I wanted to tell him to stuff it, insulting it was."

Ginny wouldn't have wanted to offer him even one hundred for it herself. "I really prefer English pieces," she said tactfully. "That's what I specialize in. Don't you have anything English?"

"Yes," he said, "I do. Tell you what, if you give me three hundred for this I'll bring you in some of my other things."

Ginny smiled. "Tell you what. Bring in your other things and I'll see if we can make a deal."

"I really need the money now. To tell you the truth, bringing the wife and kids over here has cost me a lot more than I thought and the job I've got—well, I work on commission and things are a bit slow."

"What's your job?" Ginny asked, more for something to say than for a wish to pry.

"I'm with one of the cable-television companies. I was with television back in England."

He had that defeated, beaten look that made Ginny's heart sink. She wasn't good at driving hard bargains.

"If you'd like to leave it on consignment—" she suggested.

He shook his head, the Yorkshire stubbornness coming through. "I really need the money right now."

It was tough trying to start a new life. Ginny knew, she'd done it with her own family ten years before. It was always fascinating to find out why others had left their homeland, especially when it was the same homeland as hers, and she wanted to ask him why he had come, why he had left England. He didn't look the adventurous type—he wasn't that young, the age when the lure of the unknown caught one. He had a wife and children.

"All right," she said reluctantly. "I'll give you two hundred for it. Heaven knows if I can sell it. I'll do it for a fellow countryman."

The relief spread over his round face. "You're a brick, a real brick. I'll bring you in the other things I want to sell."

Ginny sat down at the desk to write out the check. "Who shall I make it out to?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He hesitated. "You couldn't give me the cash, could you?"

She shook her head. "I don't have that much cash here. Anyway, I only buy for the shop with a check. My records, you know."

"Oh. Okay then. It's Dawson. Harold Dawson."

"And if you'll give me your address," she said.

Another slight hesitation.

"It's like this, see. We're just moving. The rent was so expensive where we were and I can't find another place that'll take children, not one that we can afford."

Ginny waited. "Mr. Dawson, I can't buy anything if I don't have an address."

She didn't want to spell out the fact that there were such things as stolen goods. Addresses of unknown people who came into the shop were vital.

"Perhaps the place where you work?" she suggested.

"Oh, aye, that's the thing." The pale eyes flickered. "I've got a card here somewhere." He fumbled around in the pockets of his blue suit, the cut of it unmistakably British, and fished out a dog-eared card. Harold Dawson, Representative, Stay Brite Television.

Ginny wrote the address down in her book and made out the check.

"Thanks," said Harold Dawson. "Thanks a million. The wife and kids can eat this week." He didn't sound as though he was joking. "I'll bring you some English things soon."

He was back the very next day. He came in more cheerfully this time, smiling his shy smile at her, a funny little man, the sort that should have stayed home with mother, not the type to be rattling around in the tough world of the American West. This time he had some pieces that were much more up Ginny's street. A small old oil painting on wood, a brass miner's lamp, a beautiful little silverplate coffee pot with an ivory knob, a pair of hanging brass beam scales, a Victorian traveling inkwell. She didn't have to haggle with him. These were things she wanted and she paid his price without question.

"They're lovely," she said, after she had made out the check. "I don't know how you can bear to part with them."

"I really need the money," he said again. "If I'd known how hard it is to get started here—well, I don't know that we'd have come."

Ginny's heart went out to him. He looked so defenseless.

"How long have you been here?"

"Since May," he said. "Not long, is it? I really miss home."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It will get better, never fear. It's only November now, that's less than six months. You'll soon be established." She laughed. "Then when you've made good you can come and buy that clock back from me."

He looked at the clock ticking away on the counter. "You got a good buy there. That clock's worth a lot of money."

Ginny didn't argue, but she didn't like the wretched thing. It was not at all to her taste, though she had to admit it was a well made piece of its kind, the brass solid and finely wrought, the porcelain face unblemished, the cupids holding the pillars on both sides sharply delineated, the works inside obviously of good quality.

It was another chance that brought one of her older dealer acquaintances into the shop three days later on one of his periodic buying trips from California. San Francisco dealers were able to ask considerably higher prices for their goods and Jim Best was one who liked to combine business with pleasure in his twice-a-year visits to Washington State. He came breezing into Ginny's shop, tall, lean, and tanned, fresh from three days of steelhead fishing.

His eyes lit on the clock.

"By God, Ginny Ames. Where did you get that?"

Ginny spoke cautiously. She couldn't discern whether there was interest or scorn in his voice.

"It's not quite my usual thing, is it?"

"No sirree, it certainly isn't."

He opened the back, peered inside, turned the clock around on its base, examined the brass relief work, upended it carefully and looked at the bottom. He traced a finger over the cupids. Now Ginny knew it wasn't scorn he was evincing.

"You haven't got a price on it."

"Well, no," Ginny said. "I haven't made up my mind yet. I was going to show it to my clock expert up in Seattle."

That was a lie.

"You are? When are you going to see him?"

"Probably at the weekend if I can make it."

"Hmmmm." Jim Best stepped back and looked at the clock. "I think I could get a better price for it in San Francisco than you could get in Seattle. I'll offer you a thousand for it."

Ginny kept her face blank. If Jim Best was offering a thousand . . .

"Now, Jim, you know and I know—"

Jim sighed theatrically. "Hell, Ginny, if I didn't know you better . . . How much?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ginny stood back and looked at the clock again, looked at Jim, crossed over to her desk, and sat down carefully. There was an art to this sort of business transaction. She pulled open a drawer, rustled through her papers. "I've got quite a bit invested in it. Let me see." She stared at the record with Harold Dawson's name on it. "Oh, well, Jim, seeing as it's you . . . twenty-five hundred."

He laughed. "Have a heart, Ginny. Two thousand."

"Twenty-two fifty."

He threw up his hands. "All right, all right. If I hadn't done so well fishing—"

He wrote out a check for $2250 and left the shop, bearing the clock and looking pleased with himself.

Ginny was stunned. Some you lose and some you win, and she knew very well that Jim Best was not going to lose on the deal. And she hadn't lost on the deal, but lying in bed that night, she thought about Harold Dawson and his struggle to make a new life, about the hungry wife and kids. A poor beaten-down little Englishman. A fellow countryman.

Her conscience still bothered her the next day. At last, with a sigh at her own lack of business acumen, she picked up the phone and dialed the cable-television number.

"Could I speak to Harold Dawson, please?"

"One moment, please."

There were several clicks and then the girl, sounding as bright as the name of the company, came back on the line.

"I'm sorry, Harold Dawson isn't here just at the moment. Can I take a message?"

"Yes, please. Tell him Ginny Ames called, from the antique shop. He can call me back." She gave the number.

It made her feel better. She'd give him another five hundred and still come out miles ahead.

It was quiet in the shop that afternoon. After lunchtime, when Harold Dawson still had not called, she retired to the back room to work on refinishing a piece of furniture and, as usual, she tuned in to her favorite radio station to keep her company. The buzzer above the door would give her warning if anyone entered the shop.

She rubbed away with the turpentine and linseed oil, idly listening to the news feature out of Washington, D.C. They often did replays from the B.B.C. in Britain which she still enjoyed hearing, even after all these years. She suddenly clicked into full attention. They were discussing a series of murders that had taken place in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

England over the past couple of years, the last of which had occurred when she had been there on her trip in the spring. Awful, terrible murders, just the kind the English relished.

A new Jack the Ripper, the mutilator of twelve young women in the north of England. In Yorkshire. She was there in England when the last one had been found. A girl, a perfectly ordinary respectable girl, a student, with family and friends. It had hit all the headlines, screamed across the front of all the newspapers, the first she had been aware of it, and now they were rehashing it for American listeners. She listened, horribly fascinated. There were interviews with the girl's friends, with the people who had last seen her alive, with the police who were searching desperately, hoping to find him before another girl was murdered.

There was one new twist since Ginny had been in England. The murderer had become bolder, not just leaving messages with the body and writing to the papers, as the original Jack the Ripper had done. This new modern Ripper had sent a tape recording, mocking the efforts of the police to catch him. They played the tape on the radio. The soft sibilant voice of the murderer filled the back room of Ginny's shop. A thickly accented Yorkshire voice. A voice that Ginny knew, recognized with a sickening lurch of her stomach. For all her rusty ear she knew it was Harold Dawson's voice.

No, she told herself. No, it's my imagination. That insignificant little man, that mother's boy. Just the kind, she told herself, just the sort to go after young women. The sort of man anyone would trust, except for those eyes, those creepy pale eyes. She shuddered in terror, and only half heard the rest of the broadcast. No murders since the last one, they were saying, the last one in April, and when had Harold Dawson said he'd left England? May? May. Not one murder since April. They were waiting, the British police said on the radio, waiting and watching for the Yorkshire Ripper to strike again. A lot of good it would do them, waiting in Yorkshire when he was thousands of miles away in Washington State, U.S.A.

What should she do? Her heart kept up its insane thumping and her hands were clammy with sweat. Tell the police here, of course, even if they found the tale hard to believe, before he started ripping girls in this part of the world. A recording of his voice would be enough to identify him, surely. But Harold Dawson? Was it possible, really possible, that funny little man with a wife and kids? Rippers didn't have wives and kids, did they?

The telephone suddenly jangled loudly, startling her, causing her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

heart to leap again, and as she heard the ringing, she remembered that she'd left a message, a message for Harold Dawson to call her. The thought of speaking to him filled her with perspiring dread and she allowed the phone to ring and ring, sidling out of the back room to watch the instrument on her desk. Then she thought—if I don't answer it, he'll come looking for me, and without another thought she ran to the phone. Perhaps I'm wrong, perhaps I'll realize that it isn't the same voice, that I've lost my ear for accents.

Her mouth was dry as she picked up the receiver.

"Could I speak to Ginny Ames?" The voice at the other end was deep, male, and very American.

"Oh, yes, yes, this is she," Ginny stumbled to answer, relief making her stammer.

"I'm returning your call," the voice said. "This is Harold Dawson."

"What? Who? I don't understand."

The voice sounded puzzled. "Harold Dawson. At Stay Brite Television. I had a message for me to call you."

"No. I mean, yes. I wanted to speak to Harold Dawson, but he's an Englishman, a little man with a Yorkshire accent."

"Lady, my name is Harold Dawson, but I'm not little, I'm not English and I'm sure as hell not from Yorkshire or wherever. I'm born and bred good old American."

"But he gave me a card," she insisted. "It said Harold Dawson, Stay Brite Television."

"Wait a minute. Hang on, will you? I think maybe I can help you."

She heard the mumbling muffled voices over the phone, as though he had the mouthpiece half covered, then he was back on the line.

"There was a fellow here a while back fits your description, worked for about a month. He left though, fired as a matter of fact."

"But I wrote a check to him, to Harold Dawson."

"You did? Well, lady, I don't know how he's going to cash it. Maybe he's going to give the money to me." He chuckled at his own joke.

"Did he have a wife and children?"

"Wife and children?" This Harold Dawson sounded astonished to be asked the question. "Hell, I don't know. Hang on," and there were more muffled noises. Then, "He gave his name as Wilfred Pickles and he had no dependents. That's what his employment slip says. He was fired because his papers weren't in order."

"Thank you. I'm sorry to have troubled you."

Ginny dropped the phone with a clatter and sank down, weak-kneed, at her desk. No wonder he hadn't given her that name.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Wilfred Pickles! He understood she would have recognized that as a falsehood. Wilfred Pickles had been a famous broadcaster years back. So it must be true, all the pieces fitted together. Now she could tell her story to the police, it wouldn't sound foolish at all, not at all, and they could arrest him for masquerading as someone else. She would be doing the world a favor. They would be grateful to her.

Then another of the small chances that went to make up the jigsaw, another coincidence without which there would have been no ending. At that precise moment, as she sat there in the lowering dusk of a November afternoon, rehearsing to herself her story to the police, the door buzzed open and he was coming in, Harold Dawson. No, not Harold Dawson. Or Wilfred Pickles. Someone whose real name she did not know.

She sat frozen in her chair and now that she knew who he was, if not what he was called, she saw him differently. A small, creepy little man, sick, psychopathic, with those horrible eyes. She could see him creeping up on those women, lying in wait for them, flying into a rage when they rejected him as who wouldn't reject him, slashing at them, tearing them apart . . . She closed her eyes, quickly opened them again.

"I brought you some more things," he started to say, his voice that same voice that had whispered out of the radio, then stopped. "But look here, do you feel all right? You look awfully pale."

He started to move toward her, sidling up to the desk, putting down the parcel he was carrying.

She didn't mean to give herself away. "You're not Harold Dawson," she said. "I know who you are."

He stopped dead, staring at her, the round pale eyes with the sinister black rings round the irises boring into her.

"What do you mean?"

He moved a step nearer.

Ginny tried to keep cool, tried to fight down the panic his presence roused. She had alarmed him, he could do the same to her that he had done to all those other women . . . Her left hand snaked down into the drawer where she had kept for years, unused, the revolver she had never thought she would have to use for protection. If she could just keep him talking, just for a few moments. Her hand closed around the handle of the gun.

"I heard it on the radio," she whispered.

"Radio?" he said, frowning. "Radio? I don't understand."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

That awful Yorkshire accent.

"You said your name was Wilfred Pickles."

His eyes were frightening, terrifying. They kept on staring at her, narrowing, darkening. He moved a step nearer. Now she had hold of the gun.

"What's your real name?" She grasped the gun more firmly.

"Ernie Clagthorne," he said. "I can explain. Don't tell anyone, don't tell them. You see . . ."

She took a great gulping breath and pulled the revolver out of the drawer, leaping to her feet.

"I know who you are, I know what you've done, you aren't going to do it any more, I'm going to send for the police."

She put her other hand on the phone and he cried, "No, not the police," and leaped for her and Ginny squeezed the trigger in sheer terror, firing the gun over and over again, until all the bullets were gone, until Harold Dawson, Wilfred Pickles, Ernie Clagthorne, the Yorkshire Ripper, lay shattered and torn across the desk, slipping and sliding to the floor, the air acrid with the smell of the gun, the sound of her sobbing the only sound to break the silence of the shop.

She told her story to the police. Hysterically, then again, more quietly, then once more, this time with reason. They listened unbelieving at first, then with interest, shaking their heads, congratulating her on her lucky escape, her presence of mind. They took the body away and let Ginny go home. They would talk to their colleagues in England.

The next day they came to her house and showed her a telegram.

"Thirteenth victim of Yorkshire Ripper discovered yesterday in park near Bradford, Yorkshire. M.O. identical to previous cases. Ernest James Clagthorne identified as resident of Leeds who emigrated to Canada May this year. Cannot be suspect."

The words swam before Ginny.

"Oh, God," she said. "Then what was he? Why did he lie about his name?"

"He came across the border illegally. He was selling his possessions to get money for his wife and kids. He didn't want to be deported, I guess."

The police officer looked at Ginny.

"I think, under the circumstances, Miss Ames, it would be advisable for you to consult a lawyer."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a ***NEW*** short story by

HENRY T. PARRY

Meet a brand-new detective—Mrs. Jan March, former policewoman, shot in line of duty in a bank holdup, now confined to a wheelchair, but as sharp and shrewd and mobile an investigator as Ironside. Once again murder demonstrates that "money attracts violence, and big money attracts the ultimate in violence" . . .

THE BLACK STAIN

by HENRY T. PARRY

"Friends, first I want to thank you for coming to this dinner tonight marking my retirement from Konglom. I am sorry to miss it. When this letter is read to you, my plane will be landing in Mohghabi, Africa. Some of you hearing these words will remember that in the past two years I audited expenditures made in the departments you head up. You received a clean bill of health. But that does not mean you were not stealing from the company. You were. But it isn't necessary to be unpleasant. All I ask is a modest share of your takings (what a suitable word), say thirty percent, to be remitted to me monthly to the Poste Restante, Mohghabi.

"What will happen if you are not reasonable? Will genial old Johnny Semple hop a plane and bring the true audit reports to the attention of the president and the board? By no means. You will recall that the ceilings in our building were opened over the past year to permit work on the air-conditioning ducts. You won't recall that I worked overtime many nights while this work was going on. In the ceiling of the private office of the person (or should I say persons?) whom I found dipping into the till I installed a short-wave receiver. Upon receiving a coded modulated signal, it will activate a series of [Editor's note: The details of these devices have been

© 1980 by Henry T. Parry.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

stricken as not in the public interest.], causing an ineradicable black liquid to seep through the office ceiling. The appearance of this spot will identify the guilty party. The transmitter of the signal will be me, in Africa. Any attempt to tamper with your ceiling will, of course, be a dead giveaway.

"Thank you again for coming. I'm sure you understand why I could not be present.

"P.S. There is no extradition treaty with Mohghabi."

Mild and uncertain laughter greeted the letter. Just like Johnny Semple with his peculiar sense of humor that was, at least up till now, without malice. But not everyone who joined in the laughter was amused.

The reader of the letter stood up once more and rapped on a glass.

"Ladies! Gentlemen!" His voice was excited and trembling. "Jim Fitch has just come from the building. He says the police called to say that Johnny Semple was found at the airport. He was shot twice. He's dead."

A collective gasp rose from the tables. Forty voices rose at once in outrage and bewilderment. But not everyone found the news shocking.

"This is Clara MacKinnon, Jim Boden, and Art Murdoch," Van Atten said. "And this is Mrs. Jan March. Mrs. March, Jim is responsible for all production, Art for services—that is, the motor vehicle fleet, building maintenance, and so forth. Clara is one of our lawyers. I have asked her to be your guide in dealing with our organization. Between Jim, Art, and me, we're responsible for Konglom's southeast operation."

The three greeted Jan March with easy cordiality, seeming not to notice the wheelchair in which she sat.

"I sent the jet to bring Mrs. March down," Van Atten went on. "She's from Stateside Security, an agency I have personally retained to find out who killed Johnny Semple. And who's stealing from the company. She is to be given all possible help. She can question anyone without going through channels. Anyone refusing to cooperate I will fire on the spot. See that you get the word out."

The two men regarded the visitor with a new interest. They saw a woman of, they guessed, thirty-five, dark-haired, with a longish, competent face and no makeup. Clara MacKinnon saw Jan March as a woman of forty-two, expensively dressed, with subtle makeup, slightly horse-faced, with the beginnings of lines about her mouth

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that told of pain experienced and handicaps overcome.

"Art, did you think about what I suggested?" Boden asked. "Let's tear out the ceilings of every private office in the building and see who's got a short-wave receiver, like Johnny Semple's letter said. The guy who has one must be the one who shot Johnny." He also knew that the cost of the ceiling work would go against Murdoch's building maintenance budget.

"No, I can't go along with that," Murdoch said. "We don't know whether Johnny was joking or not. Then too it would show a lack of confidence in our people, as if we were asking everybody to turn his pockets out."

"If Johnny was only joking, why was he shot?" Clara asked.

"That's why I called in the agency." Van Atten pushed a folder across to Jan. "Here's the information you asked for, Mrs. March. Clara put it together. Now, Clara, if you will show Mrs. March the office she's to use."

Clara MacKinnon walked beside Jan's wheelchair on their way to an office on the other side of the eighteenth floor, and explained the details of office living. She wrote her phone number on the calendar pad on Jan's desk.

"If there's anything you want, let me know. Also there's a driver assigned to you. Mary Edwards, one of our paralegals."

As she was leaving the office, Clara paused at the door and asked in what she hoped was an impersonal tone, "Polio?"

"Bullet," Jan March replied.

When she was alone Jan reached for the telephone to call her husband Jack but changed her mind. She could see him, in shorts and T-shirt, one scarred, bare foot perched on the other, hunched over a drawing board, deep in one more design. The affairs of Stateside Security, which he had inherited from an uncle, were completely outside his competence. "The only reason you married me," Jan told him, "was to get an experienced person to run the agency."

The reference to experience was not facetious. When she left the university, Jan had worked for two years in a publishing house. Recognizing that the job was a dead end, offering neither financial nor intellectual satisfaction, and needing money, she had applied to the city police department, an enterprise not noteworthy for providing either of these goals. To her surprise she had been accepted, certain that the appointment was meant for another woman of the same name. She had grimly held out against the discrimination that was practiced in the department, longing to quit but determined not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to be forced out. The reluctance of the men in the department to accept her vanished when she walked empty-handed into an apartment which the police had been besieging for twenty-four hours and persuaded an armed man to release three hostages and surrender.

Her luck ended on a hot July afternoon when she and her partner answered a bank holdup signal. In the exchange of gunfire she was hit in the lower back. On the day that the surgeon told her that she probably—repeat probably, he had emphasized—would never walk again, she met Jack Evans who was undergoing the ninth operation on his foot. Their friendship had continued after they were discharged. After a year they were married and spent their honeymoon in Paris.

She opened the folder that Clara MacKinnon had prepared and read the contents.

John Semple, thirty-five years of service. B.A. University of Pennsylvania. Honorably discharged from 1023 Signal Bn. Widower for past fifteen years. No children or other relatives.

Body found May 17 in waiting room at International Airport. Shot twice with .32 caliber weapon. Airline ticket to Zurich and Mohghabi found in pocket. There were no witnesses.

Regarded as an unassuming man of superior intelligence, with an original sense of humor. Preferring to work by himself, he refused several supervisory assignments. Was widely known throughout the company but had no close personal friends. Hobbies: chess, amateur radio, and building high-fidelity stereo systems.

No will has been found. A check of the names in his address book (enclosed) revealed no one who could shed light on the crime. Most of the people listed had died or moved.

Enclosed in the folder was Semple's passport which contained his picture in color, a man with his head slightly tilted, as though he were contemplating an answer, his face lean and narrow, the lips appearing as though they were suppressing a smile. Attached to the passport was a folded yellow card listing the inoculations Semple had received in anticipation of going to Africa.

Jan paged through the limp pages of the address book, finding only entries where the ink had smudged years ago, other entries with lines drawn through them, and some too dim to be read. One notation, written in bright green ink on the inside of the front cover, attracted her attention. Megan Hurst 21.25. Did this lady owe John Semple $21.25? Or was it the other way around?

The phone rang.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I called to ask if you would have dinner with me tonight," Clara said. "I thought it might be pleasanter than your hotel."

"That's thoughtful of you. I'd be very glad to. While I have you on the phone, did you notice that name in Semple's address book? Megan Hurst."

"The police asked about it too. But nobody has been able to find out if any such person exists. She's not listed in the phone book or in any other directory. I know she is not an employee."

"It's probably meaningless. Tell me, how can I find out what Semple was auditing?"

"The man who heads up the audit group is named Milton Rush. His office is on the floor just below yours."

"Thank you. And thanks for thinking of me about dinner. I don't like to eat alone."

When Jan presented herself at the door of Milton Rush's office, she saw a roly-poly man with a shock of gray hair that rose in a small wave straight up from his forehead to break into ringlets.

"Ah, yes, I heard you were here," he said when Jan explained her mission. "Too bad about Johnny. Worked with him for years."

"The obvious course of investigation is to find out what John Semple was auditing, and whom it might have exposed. That person, it seems to me, is the logical suspect in his murder."

"Trouble is," Rush said, "his audits didn't show up anything significant."

"Do you believe what he said in that letter?" Jan asked.

"I've thought about it and thought about it. No, I don't think so. Johnny was just trying to be funny. I anticipated that a number of people would be interested in what Johnny had been working on, so I had each of Johnny's audit reports—there were five—reproduced. But you're only the second person to ask. I've gone over them," Rush said, handing Jan copies of the reports, "and they're pretty innocuous. I understand they didn't find anything significant in his belongings either."

"What did they cover, these audits?"

"Routine stuff, some of it I'm surprised Johnny wasted his talent on. Billing under contract with the outfit that cleans our buildings; an audit of the cost of building a new storage facility; a check on the billing for a new freight elevator; a check of the gasoline bills and receipts for the truck fleet; an examination of the security measures to protect blank check paper in the Treasurer's office. No big deals any of them, but they must be done."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Five audits. Would that be a normal workload for, say, two years?"

"I think they could have been done in twelve or fifteen months at the most. But maybe Johnny was slackening off a bit before retiring."

"That suggests he may have been doing something else during that period. By the way, who asked for these audit reports?"

"Art Murdoch. But you'd expect that, seeing he's responsible for buildings and for the motor vehicle fleet, two areas Johnny covered in these audits. I hear Art is having his supervisors in and he's going to hold some feet to the fire, just to see what will happen. I can tell him. Nothing."

As she and Clara were returning to Jan's hotel after dinner, Jan recalled what her husband Jack had said about women's conversations. "They'll tell each other the most intimate details of their lives after a fifteen-minute acquaintance, but torture wouldn't get them to tell a lifelong friend how old they are." The talk she had with Clara over dinner gave support to this theory, which she had derided when Jack first proclaimed it.

"I suppose I'm typical," Clara had said as they sat over coffee, "the unmarried, highly educated professional woman who after years of family obligations—Mother and I lived together until her death three years ago—finds herself alone. Absolutely alone, at least after five o'clock."

Jan remained silent, waiting for Clara to go on.

"I wanted very much to be married. But the men who asked me, I didn't want. The ones I wanted, they never asked. Oh, I manage perfectly well by myself, but I was never meant to be alone. Frankly, I hate it."

Jan examined the handsome, intelligent woman sitting opposite her—dark shining hair, a faintly glowing tan to her skin, carefully dressed, and with a subtle perfume (give me time and I can identify it, Jan told herself), and an air of distinction that was evidenced in the fine bone structure of her face and in her walk, and, especially, in the precision and clarity of her speech. There were not many men, she thought, who merited the companionship of a woman of Clara MacKinnon's caliber. "Did you know John Semple?"

"Oh, yes. I thought I did, but now I'm not so sure. One of my responsibilities is reviewing every contract the company is about to sign. So when John Semple was auditing something we were paying

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for under a contract and he had questions, he would come to me. But Johnny was basically a remote kind of man, with a certain dignity, but you sensed an underlying coldness, as if his real interest was John Semple. I've had dinner with him a number of times."

"You were interested in each other?"

"Oh, nothing like that. Johnny and I live a few streets apart. We used to run into each other occasionally in a neighborhood restaurant. So when we bumped into one another, it was a natural to share a table. After all, if you've been discussing a contract with a man all afternoon and then you meet him by chance that evening, each of you alone—"

"Of course. One of the things Milt Rush said was that Semple audited the billing under contract for gasoline."

"I remember the contract. Pretty routine. Konglom buys all its gas from Plenum Petroleum who delivers it to storage tanks in our garages. Their driver gets a receipt signed by our garage foreman. Our comptroller checks the signed receipts—copies come in with the oil company's bills—against the bill before he pays it. Was there something questionable?"

"Not that I know of. I just mentioned it because ever since I bought a second-hand car, I'm suspicious of anything connected with motor vehicles.

"In that write-up about Semple," Jan went on, "it said chess was one of his hobbies. You can't play chess by yourself. Whom did he play with?"

"I have no idea. He went down to some chess club on Grady Street. He always said 'club' was too grand a name for the place, a storefront they couldn't rent to anyone else. He said he could always get a pickup game there."

When they arrived at the hotel, Jan inched her way out of the car and began unfolding her chair, Clara standing by, deliberately unhelpful, sensing the other's need for independence. With one hand on the chair and the other grasping Clara's arm, Jan lowered herself into the chair, noticing that Clara winced at her grasp. Once more Jan became aware of the perfume Clara used, and its name, "Nuit de Splendor," came to her. They said good night, and as Jan made her way across the hotel lobby she thought about Clara MacKinnon and how she was the classic case of the superior woman who has not found a mate of her own tastes and worth.

The evening was still young and it occurred to Jan that a visit to Semple's chess club might unearth someone who would have seen

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him from a point of view uninfluenced by the Konglom organization. Wheeling around, she headed back to the sidewalk, summoned a taxi, and told the driver to take her to Grady Street. The driver looked at her dubiously, shrugged, and helped her into the cab.

Grady Street was an atrophying vein in the city's circulatory system. The taxi cruised by shabby storefronts, some of which were boarded up, and stopped in front of a one-story building that bore a homemade sign identifying the Capobianca Chess Club. Telling the driver to wait, Jan unfolded her chair and wheeled herself through the open doorway. None of the players of the four games in progress raised his head at her entrance.

At the back of the room a young man looked up from a paperback book and came forward. Somehow Jan had expected to be greeted by an elderly man bearing a foreign-language newspaper, while two bearded conspirators plotted in a corner.

"May I help you, ma'am?" The accent was unalloyed Appalachian.

"I'd like to talk to somebody who knew John Semple. He used to play here."

"Semple? Semple? I don't recall any Semple, ma'am."

Jan showed him the passport photo. The young man scanned it and shook his head. He raised his voice.

"Anybody here know a man named John Semple?"

There was no response, the players bending in thought or leaning back in suppressed triumph. When the young man repeated the question, one man casually raised his hand in answer, without lifting his eyes from the board. The young man walked over to the players, glanced at the board, and returned.

"That fellow who raised his hand, he's going to be checkmated in about three moves. His name is Casimir Fodos."

As she waited for Casimir Fodos to accept the inevitable, Jan studied the man. Slight, with heavy glasses, and the hard, honed face of the survivor, he bore an air of poorly restrained anger at a world where the clean logic of the chessboard did not prevail. When he had reluctantly conceded defeat, he came over to Jan and bowed formally. "Casimir Fodos, madam. At your service."

He seated himself on a wire-backed ice-cream-parlor chair. Jan expected him to burst out with "It's not fair," in the hopeless cry of all idealists, but he listened quietly and sympathetically.

"I saw it in the paper. An outrage. But this is an outrageous world. I too have been a victim."

"Did John Semple ever discuss his work with you? Or say anything

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

else that might bear on his death?"

"Never." Mr. Fodos shook his head in firm conviction. "Never. We would talk mostly about chess. We played maybe once a week. I would drive him home. I knew he was an auditor for Konglom, that's all."

"He never mentioned what he was auditing?"

"No. He always said that what he was doing was too dull and complicated to interest anyone. It only got interesting when you found something. Even then, he said, you were sorry you had."

They talked for several minutes more, and Mr. Fodos, although frequently expressing his high opinion of Semple, was unable to provide any additional information. He accompanied Jan to the taxi and opened the door. The driver started to pull away when Fodos rapped on the window.

"One thing Semple told me," he said. "One night when I was driving him home, I stopped for gas. As we waited, he said something I didn't pay much attention to, a remark so—"

"What did he say, Mr. Fodos?"

"He said this gas station is going to be in trouble. They've been selling stolen gas. Sooner or later someone was going to find out."

"Did he say how he knew?"

"No. He did say they might not get caught for a long time, but they'd be caught."

"What was the name of the station?"

"Resolute. The one out on Plumtree. They got about three stations, all in the city."

Jan thanked the earnest little man and left him deep in thought, presumably about chess. She was beginning to think that Semple had written the truth in his farewell letter, that someone was stealing from Konglom, and he had suppressed his findings. Or perhaps John Semple himself had been, as he defined it, dipping into the till.

Whichever it was, she concluded that the iron law of human conduct had once more demonstrated its sad truth: money attracts violence, and big money attracts the ultimate in violence.

That night, as she was drifting into sleep, the name Megan Hurst once more floated up into her consciousness, its significance hinging on one fact. She reached for the telephone and dialed her husband, nine hundred miles away. When he answered, she could tell from the abstracted tone of his voice that he was still working.

"Before you give me any connubial sweet-talk, you were once the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

teenage bane of the amateur band, weren't you?"

"That's me. K2JRS. The handle is Jack. Bane of the band. Call me any time."

"Get out the rig. Isn't that what you call that short-wave equipment you've got in your closet? And hook it up."

"What do you want me to do with it?"

"Does the name Megan Hurst 21.25 mean anything to you?"

"I once knew a girl named Megan Hughes but her measurements—"

"Would megahertz 21.25 mean anything?"

"Yes, I used to talk on it all the time. It's the frequency you would use on the amateur band to transmit to and from Africa."

"Ah! Now here's what I want you to do. But not until I tell you."

The next morning Clara appeared at the door of Jan's office accompanied by a tall girl with alert black eyes.

"This is Mary Edwards, one of our paralegals. She's been assigned to help you in your investigation, to drive you around if you should need it."

They chatted for a few minutes before Jan handed a sealed envelope to Mary Edwards.

"I would appreciate it if you would take this down to Zurich Air Lines and bring their answer back. I've already called them about it. The Konglom name carries weight around this town I've noticed."

"May I ask you what you want from Zurich Air?" Clara asked.

"Just a shot in the dark. When I get their answer, maybe we'll discuss it."

When the two women left, Jan called Milton Rush, the chief auditor, and asked if she could see him. She entered his office to find him practising putts on the rug, zealously keeping his head down even as he greeted her.

"That's the trouble with being the boss," he said, "you've got to stay home and mind the store. When I was a field auditor, it was always possible to take your clubs out of the car and play nine on company time."

"Rank has responsibilities," Jan agreed.

She related what she had learned from Casimir Fodos about Semple's statement that a Resolute gas station was selling stolen gas.

"But I have no evidence that the gas was stolen from Konglom," Jan pointed out. "But Semple did audit the billing for gasoline. Maybe he found that the tank truck supposed to deliver to a Kon-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

glom garage was delivering to Resolute, with Konglom paying the bill. I believe a gasoline truck must hold about ten thousand gallons."

A faraway look spread across Rush's face, making Jan think that his mind was hallooing off on some complicated scent of malfeasance. But whatever course he was pursuing had a disappointing end because he shook his head.

"No, it's not possible. Every bill from Plenum Petroleum is supported by copies of delivery receipts. These receipts are signed by our garage foremen. We've got the foremen's signatures here on file in Miss Korbin's bill-checking unit. They check every receipt against the signature file before letting the bill go through for payment."

"Do you have a company directory that I could have, one that gives the names of all employees?"

"Here, take mine. It's got every name in it, from Van Atten on down."

"How do I get to Miss Korbin's bill-checking unit?"

"It's on the sixth floor. I'll call her and tell her you're coming."

Miss Korbin was a tan lady, of a certain age, with tan skin, tan eyes, small tan spots on the backs of her hands, and a dress of some indeterminate tan material. She sat at a desk in the rear of a large room, overseeing the efforts of some fifteen girls, none of whom did more than glance up briefly as Jan made her way to Miss Korbin's command post. Miss Korbin listened without comment to Jan's request, and without taking her eyes from Jan's face or raising her voice, ordered, "Henrietta, the signature cards for the garage foremen." Her voice sounded awkward and unused. "And four months of gas bills and receipts."

Henrietta scuttled to a file and returned with seven five-by-seven cards and a batch of bills and receipts. Jan almost expected Henrietta to bow herself out backward, as before royalty.

Examining the signature cards, Jan found that each showed the name of the foreman, his garage address, and his signature. The line reading "Authority to Approve Delegated by" was signed "A. Murdoch."

"Could you reproduce these cards for me, please?"

"Henrietta."

Miss Korbin handed the cards to the girl and nodded toward the reproducing machine. As they waited, Miss Korbin regarded Jan with an expression of neutral sufferance. To Jan's questions she returned curt replies.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I suppose Semple visited your unit when he audited gas bills?"

"Yes."

"And he would have free access to the signature cards?"

"Yes."

"Did he ever bring anyone down here with him?"

"No." She paused. "No, wait. Once he did have Mr. Murdoch with him. He asked me to explain to Mr. Murdoch how our bill-checking procedure worked."

A faint flush enlivened Miss Korbin's sallow face. Jan wondered if her question had intruded into some fantasy garden inhabited by her and Art Murdoch.

"So it would be fairly easy for Semple, or for Mr. Murdoch, to slip an additional signature card for a non-existent foreman into the approval file?"

Miss Korbin's brevity vanished before the monstrousness of the suggestion.

"If you're saying that one of the finest men in this company would do anything like that—"

"Hold it. All I'm asking is could they?"

"Yes, they could," Miss Korbin snapped. "But for you to come sniffing around here hinting—"

"I'm not hinting. I'm just feeling my way. Thank you very much."

Back in her office Jan checked the names on the seven signature cards against the company directory. Six of the foremen's names were listed; the seventh, David Gibbons, was not. She sorted out the receipts bearing the signature of David Gibbons and found the delivery address on each was 4800 Plumtree Street, an address not included in the company garage locations. The receipts covered a total of fifty thousand gallons over a period of four months.

Someone *had* slipped an additional signature card in the file. Semple? Art Murdoch, the high-ranking executive who showed an unwarranted interest in what was a routine office procedure? Or even that fancier of accounting labyrinths, Milton Rush? She was wondering what to do with what she had discovered when Mary Edwards entered her office, an envelope in her hand.

"Any problem with Zurich Air?" Jan asked.

"No. They had it ready."

Jan put the envelope in the drawer of her desk and locked the drawer, resisting an impulse to tear the letter open and learn if her suspicion had been confirmed.

"Would you please drive me out to 4800 Plumtree Street. Some-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thing is rotten and this time it's in Plumtree, not Denmark."

The gas station at 4800 Plumtree had a crew of car-struck teenagers manning the pumps. When Jan asked for David Gibbons, one of them nodded toward a door marked *Office*.

"Ask in there. I just started here this morning."

They entered a greasy room that smelled of stale cigarette smoke, one wall of which was decorated with calendar pictures of nude women in postures of stylized provocation. A man sat at a littered desk, talking on the telephone, picking up and replacing a cigarette on the scarred desk. His greenish shirt and trousers gave him a vaguely uniformed look.

As they waited for him to complete his conversation, Jan and Mary examined the photographs that were taped to the wall above the desk, pictures of groups of men at banquet tables, identified in white ink as conventions of the state association of filling-station proprietors, pictures of bowling teams, cabin cruisers, hunting and fishing parties, and one wrinkled picture of an air crew lined up before a bomber.

"Yeah?" The man hung up the phone and regarded them as if convinced that whatever it was they wanted would be an unbearable annoyance. Jan sensed that hidden in his manner was a gray, leering contempt.

"Are you David Gibbons?" Jan asked.

"Never heard of him," he snapped.

"I've got receipts from Plenum Petroleum for deliveries to this address, signed by David Gibbons." She handed him a half dozen receipts.

The man glanced briefly at them, shook his head, and returned them.

"Nobody here by that name," he said. "Besides, we get our gas from Upstate Fuel." He opened a drawer and pulled out a dozen invoices on the Upstate Fuel Company's billheads and showed them to Jan.

"Well, thank you for your time," she said, handing back the bills. "Sorry to have bothered you."

"Did you notice? Did you notice?" Mary Edwards said in an excited, guarded voice when they were back in the car.

"What I noticed was one of those hunting pictures, almost below the level of the desk. It shows two men, each holding a rifle, standing in front of the suspended carcasses of two deer. One of the men was that fellow in there. The other was Art Murdoch."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No, I meant that guy in there," Mary said. "The name tape above the breast pocket of his shirt. It said *Gibbons*. That man in there is David Gibbons."

When they returned to the Konglom building, Jan paused in the lobby.

"Would you do one more thing before you go home. Go over to the office of the Secretary of State for this state and ask to see the articles of incorporation for the Resolute Service Station Company and find out who owns it. Leave the answer on my desk first thing in the morning."

The great building was silent, drained of its occupants in the five o'clock outpouring. Jan waited in her office for the lobby people to call and say her taxi had arrived. She felt like the survivor in some future space city from which the last rocket had departed.

When the call came from the lobby, she made her way to the elevator bank where to her surprise she found the door of one elevator shaft open and unguarded. This breach of safety practice, if seen by someone like Art Murdoch, would cost the culprit his job. Plastic bags of wastepaper lay stacked near the open shaft awaiting pickup. From somewhere below in the shaft she could hear the voices of the cleaning people.

As Jan reached to push the DOWN button, the corridor lights went out, with the only lights visible in the blackness coming dimly from the depths of the shaft. She heard soft, rapid footsteps approaching in the darkness and felt her chair spun violently around. There was one strong thrust and she rolled over the threshold and down the shaft.

"Good morning."

As she wheeled herself into Murdoch's office where Clara and Murdoch were bent over papers, Jan watched them closely to see if either showed surprise at seeing her alive. But neither exhibited any expression other than a mild curiosity that she had appeared without announcement by Murdoch's secretary.

"I know you won't mind being interrupted to hear that the case is finished."

"Great! Wonderful!" said Murdoch. "Tell us. Tell us."

"I congratulate you," Clara said. "Don't keep us waiting. Who killed Semple?"

"Let's begin with the premise that John Semple was killed by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

someone he found defrauding the company and whom he tried to shake down."

"Somehow I just can't see Johnny mixed up in anything like that," Murdoch said.

"Neither can I," Clara said. "He just wasn't that kind of person."

"But he was. What he said in his farewell letter was no joke. May I use your phone?" She addressed the question to Murdoch.

They watched as she dialed eleven digits, indicating that the call was not local.

"Don't talk," Jan spoke into the transmitter. "Do what I told you to do. Right away!" She hung up abruptly.

"First let's talk about fraud," Jan said. "After that we'll talk about attempted murder. Then we're going to talk about successful murder."

Murdoch's face turned cherry, as if containing suddenly increased pressure.

Clara regarded Jan with surprise and seemed about to reach out her hand to caution her concerning her speech, much as a lawyer might restrain a client who is about to speak unwisely.

"The Resolute gas station at 4800 Plumtree is selling gas that Konglom is paying for. You, Murdoch, have authorized approval on the basis of delivery receipts signed by David Gibbons. You slipped a signature approval card for Gibbons into the signature file in Miss Korbin's unit, Miss Korbin who is not disposed to think badly of you. You are responsible for running Konglom's vehicle fleet, so it would be a simple matter for you to call Plenum Petroleum and tell them to start deliveries to 4800 Plumtree, telling them it was a service station under contract to Konglom."

"You can't prove it. You can't prove anything." Murdoch's voice was choked.

"You and David Gibbons are old buddies. Such good friends that you have your picture taken together on hunting trips."

"What does that prove?" Murdoch's voice was now barely above a whisper.

"How do you explain your approval on a signature card for a nonexistent employee?"

"Forgery. That's what it is. Forgery."

"Mary Edwards checked the articles of incorporation to see who owns Resolute. Who do you think? None other than Arthur Murdoch. Careless Arthur Murdoch, not even using a dummy. But let's say I'm wrong. What about John Semple's letter saying that he had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

planted a short-wave device in the guilty person's office. Look."

She pointed to the ceiling above Murdoch's desk. A black stain seeped across the whiteness of the soundproofing ceiling tile. Murdoch gazed at it open-mouthed, his features changing proportion under the strain of fright and disbelief. Clara stared at the spreading stain and then looked in astonishment and dawning conviction at Murdoch, whose face was assuming the ominous color of raw meat.

"Now for attempted murder," Jan continued. "I submit that yesterday afternoon Gibbons called you and told you I was asking questions about gasoline bills. What makes me think that way is that last night when I was leaving the building, somebody tried to kill me."

Murdoch blew up. He stood up and pounded with both fists on his desk, his eyes narrow in anger.

"That's enough! That's enough, I say! First fraud and now murder. Can't we stop her"—he appealed to Clara—"isn't there some way we can prevent this—this—this character assassination? Does she think because she has a disability and imposes on our sympathy, I'm not going to do anything about these insane accusations?"

He sat down abruptly, looked up, and when he saw the stain widening, he hastily turned his eyes away.

"Last night I found the door of the elevator shaft open. Maybe it was left open improperly so the cleaning people could pick up wastepaper. Or maybe it was opened by somebody who has one of the special keys used for that purpose. You, Mr. Murdoch, you're responsible for building maintenance, so it would be easy for you to get such a key. Then the lights went out. A simple matter of pulling the switches in the floor panel box. Even I could spot where that is. With the hall in darkness it was no problem at all to push me down the shaft."

"But if you were pushed down, how—" Clara began.

"I'll come to that, as you lawyers are fond of saying, at the proper time."

"Mr. Murdoch, do you use 'Nuit de Splendor' perfume?"

"Don't be frivolous."

"I didn't think you did. But you do, don't you, Clara?"

"Why, yes, but what's that got to do with—" She stopped.

"The person who tried to kill me wore 'Nuit de Splendor.' I recognized it because I used to use it."

"Are you accusing me of attempted murder, a crime in itself?" Clara began, "because if you are, you will regret it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You were present in my office when I asked Mary Edwards to go to Zurich Air Lines. That alerted you to my suspicions about you and Semple. That same evening when I was waiting by the elevator shaft that the cleaning people had left open, you saw me. Just by accident, but you realized your opportunity. You went to the floor panel and pulled the switches. With the elevator corridor absolutely dark, you took off your shoes, came out into the corridor, and gave my chair a push down the shaft. It was only that faint whiff of 'Nuit de Splendor' that identified you."

Clara sat on the edge of her chair, as if gathering herself to refute her accuser, to disprove the damning words being uttered. Beneath her dark shining hair her face was ashen.

"There could be only one reason for you to try to kill me," Jan said. "I had found something connecting you and John Semple.

"The night we had dinner together," Jan went on, "when we got back to my hotel and I got out of the car, I grasped your arm to help myself into the chair. You winced as if I had touched a sensitive spot. Later it occurred to me that John Semple had had a series of inoculations in preparation for his African journey. They were listed in the yellow folder found with his passport. If you had a sore arm, wasn't it possible that you too had been inoculated, that you might be going away with John Semple? The next morning I had Mary Edwards go down to Zurich Air Lines and get a copy of the passenger list for the flight Semple was waiting for when he was killed. His name was on it. So was the name of Clara MacKinnon."

Clara rose suddenly and stood erect before Murdoch's desk, as though about to present an appeal to the bench, her grave face and proud bearing reminding Jan of Portia in "The Merchant of Venice." The black stain in the ceiling now appeared directly above her head in a silent and sinister accusation.

Reluctantly Jan forced herself to frame the next sentence.

"He told you he didn't want you to come with him, didn't he?"

The pallor of Clara's face gave way to a faint flush, as if the fact of rejection were more embarrassing than the charge of murder.

"He tore up my plane ticket and threw the pieces at my feet," Clara said in a barely audible voice, the words sounding as though she had uttered them a thousand times. "We were to be married in Zurich. We had planned it for three years. He told me while we were waiting for our flight to be announced."

"Where did you get the gun?"

"It had been my father's. I had a license for it. Johnny said to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bring it along because where we were going you never knew. I intended to give it to the stewardess during the flight. I just pressed my handbag against Johnny and pulled the trigger twice. The bag served as a silencer. Not that I cared whether anyone knew what I was doing. I left him there, waiting for his flight to be called."

She buried her face in her hands.

"That—that—up there," Murdoch faltered, pointing at the stain.

"My husband is a former amateur-radio ham. I gave him the frequency I found in Semple's address book. A few minutes ago I called him from your phone and told him to transmit."

"But if she—" he glanced at Clara—"pushed you down the shaft, how did you survive?"

"Because the elevator car in that shaft was stopped at the next floor down. That meant that the top of the car was only a foot or so below the level of the floor I was on. I got greasy but I wasn't hurt. And the cleaning people who got me out were so scared about having left that door open that it was easy to get them to keep quiet."

"Well, what do you do now?" Murdoch looked apprehensively at the black stain on his ceiling.

"I used to be a policewoman. I took an oath to uphold the law. Clara, as an attorney, an officer of the court, you took an oath too. What would you do?"

Irrationally Jan wished, rather than this superior woman, that anyone else—Art Murdoch, John Semple, Miss Korbin, anyone—were awaiting punishment.

Clara MacKinnon raised her head, and seeming to address herself to the space beyond the eighteenth-floor windows, answered without hesitation. "I would go to the district attorney."

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO SUBSCRIBERS

All subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to P.O. Box 2600, Greenwich, Connecticut 06836.

For change of address, please advise 6 to 8 weeks before moving. Send us your current mailing label with new address.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Thrust a stick into the water and it looks bent. Pull it out and it looks straight. Refraction, we call it. But who's to say there aren't other refractions we can't sense and that the true shape isn't something altogether different . . .

MAYBE IT DIDN'T HAPPEN

by ROBERT EDWARD ECKELS

Martin looked up irritably as his secretary came into the office. He was a stocky man in his mid- to late-fifties with a shock of iron-gray hair brushed straight back and a heavy, scowling countenance. The girl found him more than slightly intimidating. It showed in her manner now and only served to increase his irritation.

"Mr. Ross is waiting outside to see you," the girl said.

Martin frowned. He'd known for some weeks that Ross was back and under ordinary circumstances he would have looked him up, congratulated him on his recovery, and wished him well. After all, they'd been colleagues for years, with desks adjacent to each other at the edge of the carpet that separated the upper echelon of the executive hierarchy from the general staff. And if they had never been exactly friends, they were at least on friendly terms, a relationship they'd managed to maintain—on the surface, at least—when the unexpected opening of a vice-presidential spot made it clear that one, but only one, was going to move farther up on the carpet.

Martin was honest enough with himself to admit even now that Ross had had the inside edge and that, had events followed their normal course, it would have been Ross sitting behind the big desk now instead of him. But events *hadn't* followed their normal course. Shortly before the decision was to be announced, a truck had veered across the freeway and smashed into Ross's car.

It had taken the rescue teams two hours to cut Ross out of the wreckage and then he had been carted off to the hospital almost literally more dead than alive.

Martin hadn't caused the accident, of course, and he couldn't be blamed for what had followed either. True, he had pressed for de-

© 1980 by Robert Edward Eckels.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cisions that only a vice-president could make, but those decisions had to be made one way or the other. And if people had read into his frequently expressed concern over Ross's health fears that Ross would never return—well, that wasn't his fault either. At least no one who mattered had suggested it was. And when finally the job had been given to him, it had been the company's decision, not his.

Still, he found himself strangely reluctant to face the other man. "Did he say what he wanted?"

"No, sir," the girl said. "Should I tell him you can't see him now?"

Martin continued to hesitate another few seconds, then sighed. "No, I suppose now's as good as ever. But fifteen minutes, no more. Then you buzz me with an urgent call I have to take. Understand?"

"Yes, sir," she said and went back out to her office, then held the door for Ross to enter.

Despite himself, Martin was shocked at his former colleague's appearance. Ross had never been a big man, but at least there had been some meat on his bones. Now he was thin to the point of emaciation and his face was pale and haggard above a gaping collar. He limped toward Martin and carried his right hand awkwardly in his jacket pocket.

Martin rose and smiled falsely. "Charlie," he said, "it's good to see you. You're looking well."

Ross smiled wanly, acknowledging the lie for what it was, and sank into the chair Martin waved him into.

"I would have been around to see you earlier," Martin said, "but—" He spread his hands to indicate the office and the responsibilities that went with it.

"I understand," Ross said.

Martin looked at him sharply to see if there was anything to read behind the remark, but Ross's face was set and preoccupied. "In fact," he went on, "I wouldn't be bothering you now if I didn't need your help so desperately."

"Well, of course," Martin said. He shifted uncomfortably in his chair. "I'm sure we can work something out. Bend a few rules with the company welfare fund—"

"It's not money," Ross said. He smiled the same wan smile as before. "I almost wish it were. At least money problems have a way of resolving themselves one way or the other. This isn't so simple. It's what's happening to me—or rather what's going to happen—or has happened. It's all the same in the end—and in the beginning."

"I don't understand," Martin said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm not sure I do either," Ross said. "I'll try to explain, though." He fixed pale, watery eyes earnestly on Martin. "It all started—or maybe I should say I first became aware of it—about a week after I'd come back to work. It was the first full day I'd put in and I was exhausted at the end of it. As usual, Liz picked me up at the station, and we were just turning into our drive when suddenly I was back on that highway watching that truck bear down on me. I could even make out the driver's face, see him twisting frantically at the wheel. Then—then I was back in the garage with Liz."

Martin nodded sympathetically. "I can understand," he said. "It was a traumatic experience. It's natural you'd find it hard to forget."

Ross smiled wryly. "But that's just it, Fred. I had forgotten it. When I came out of the coma I had no recollection of anything happening after I left the parking lot here that day. The doctors called it selective amnesia and said it wasn't unusual in my case."

"So now your memory is coming back," Martin said.

"That's what I thought. At first. But then it happened again—only this time it had nothing to do with the accident. I was back at the university. An afternoon class had been unexpectedly cancelled and I got back to the fraternity house an hour earlier than I normally would have and caught my roommate and his girlfriend—what's the expression—*in flagrante delicto?*" He looked up, anguished. "Fred, that was the 1950s. We didn't take sex for granted the way they do now. It was a big thing. I couldn't possibly have forgotten that. And yet I swear to you, Fred, I had no recollection of it before that day."

"Maybe it didn't happen, Charlie," Martin said.

Ross nodded. "I know," he said. "And that's what I told myself as I found myself more and more frequently suddenly slipping off from one time and place to another with no warning—that it was just my mind playing tricks on me. But if that was so, why was I never confused or disoriented when I came back to reality? Why did I know exactly what was going on, even if I caught someone in the middle of a sentence?" He shook his head as if to clear it. "I had to check it out. I couldn't talk to the doctors until I did know for sure, because I knew what they'd think and how they'd handle it.

"I called my brother and in the course of the conversation I casually asked if he remembered the time when we were kids and he and our father and I had gone fishing and the fish had caught him. I held my breath waiting for his response, because of course that wasn't something that had happened when we were children. It was one of the flashbacks I'd had after the accident.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

" 'Do I ever,' he said. 'You and Dad laughing like crazy when I lost my balance and fell in and me just standing there in the water, dripping wet and not sure whether to be angry or cry or laugh with you. To tell you the truth, I don't remember which I finally did do.'

"And neither did I, because the incident had ended with us laughing and him standing trembling in the water. But I did know now that I wasn't imagining these things. They were really happening—and at the time I was experiencing them."

Martin looked incredulous. "Don't be ridiculous," he said.

"I'm not. Remember college philosophy and Plato's analogy of men chained in a cave with a fire behind them? What they see as reality is really only shadows flickering on a wall. What *we* see as reality is only what our senses tell us, and God knows they can't be trusted. Thrust a stick into water and it appears bent. Pull it out and it appears straight. Refraction, we say. Straight is the reality. But who's to say there aren't other refractions we can't sense and that the true shape isn't something altogether different.

"The same with the universe around us. The sense that it's ordered and subject to rules comes from inside us, Fred. And like our other senses it's not perfect. Sometimes things seem to happen twice. When they do, we shrug it off and call it *déjà vu* or paramnesia. And sometimes the sense is damaged or destroyed so that we begin to perceive the chaos that is around us. That's what's happened to me. I see things as they really are, not as everybody thinks they are."

Martin sat for a long moment, dumbfounded. He shook his head. "You're mad," he said, "stark, staring mad."

"Sometimes I think so too," Ross said. "But they say if you can think you're crazy, you aren't. So I can't be sure. And it would be so much easier if I were, because, you see, Fred, these things don't always happen in the past. Sometimes they're in the future. I'm in a prison cell, condemned and convicted of murder—and guilty. What I don't know, though, is who I've killed. And that's the real horror. Because few of us kill strangers; we kill people close to us. I think, my God, what if it's Liz? Or one of the boys? Or all of them together?" He broke off and looked earnestly at Martin. "I can't let that happen, Fred. You can understand that, can't you?"

"Oh, yes," Martin said. "And I can understand that you really need help. What I don't understand is why you came to me."

"Don't you, Fred?" Ross said. He took the gun from his pocket and pointed it at Martin. His hand was surprisingly steady. "Don't you really?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* Schlock Homes story by

ROBERT L. FISH

With a bow to the title of a TV program, we now baptize this series with the acronym of LATOSH—Life And Times Of Schlock Homes. The series, as you will see, continues to reflect the mirror image of The Great Detective. That is to say, for you to see the mirror image, we do what photographers often do—"flop" the picture . . .

THE ADVENTURE OF THE UKRAINIAN FOUNDLING ORPHANS

by ROBERT L. FISH

It was a fine warm morning in June of the year '79 and my friend Mr. Schlock Homes and myself were taking our ease after breakfast in our quarters at 221-B Bagel Street. I was perusing the daily journal in search of some bit of crime news that might be of interest to my friend, while Homes was practicing sudden stops on his fiddle—*stringhalt* as it is known both in musical and veterinarian circles—when a certain article caught my attention.

"Homes," I asked curiously, glancing up from the paper, "what is a U.F.O.?"

"U.F.O.?" Homes replied, frowning in my general direction. "I honestly cannot say, Watney." He put aside his fiddle for the moment and turned to pull down one of his many reference volumes from the shelf behind him, leafing through the pages. He paused at last, nodding. "Ah! Here we are," said he with satisfaction. "Ukrainian Foundling Orphans." He returned the volume to its proper place

© *1980 by Robert L. Fish.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and was about to attend to his fiddle once again, when I held up my hand.

"Homes," I asked, "are you quite sure you are in possession of the latest in that reference series?"

He turned to check and then nodded. "Of course. 1897. Have there been any more recent?"

"Probably not," I admitted, and returned to my article. "I was merely wondering. It is simply that it says here that these U.F.O.'s have just recently been sighted in London, and I cannot see the connection."

"That is because you do not use the analytical method," Homes replied. "Actually, the matter is obviously more in your field than in mine. Blind before, the poor orphans undoubtedly have finally, through some miracle operation probably at St. Bart's here in London, been given the gift of vision."

"Of course!" I said, ashamed of myself for my obtuseness, and was about to turn the page of the journal and continue my search for something more of a criminal nature, when there came the sound of footsteps on the stairs. A moment later our page had ushered into our presence none other than Criscroft Homes, Schlock's brother. It was rare, indeed, for Criscroft to leave his desk at the Foreign Office to pay us a visit during his office hours, and rarer still for him to do so without first telegraphing his intentions.

Recognising the urgency of the matter, Homes instantly finished the page he had been practicing, put his fiddle back in its case, clipped the bow in place, placed his handkerchief across the strings to protect them, closed the case, stood it in the corner behind him, and then came to his feet at once, his hand extended.

"Criscroft! Your problem must be grave, indeed, to bring you unheralded here at this hour! Pray tell me what it is."

Criscroft Homes barely touched his brother's outstretched hand before falling heavily into the basket chair before the cold fireplace and looking up at his brother broodingly.

"Schlock," he said, and the very lack of emotion in his voice made it even more imperspicacious than usual, "I'm afraid Her Majesty's Government once again has need of your services."

Homes instantly sat down across from his brother while I repaired to the sideboard for a better view of the two. "Of course!" Homes said warmly. "Pray tell me all."

"Yes," Criscroft said heavily, while I poured some whisky into a glass in order to lower the level and permit me to observe them

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

better through the bottle. "Well, there have been reports of late of unidentified flying objects having been seen in England."

"Unidentified flying objects?" Homes cried, appalled, and then paused, frowning. "What are they?"

"That is precisely the problem," Criscroft replied in a worried tone. "If we knew what they were they would not be unidentified."

"You may have a point there," Homes said thoughtfully, while I could only stand and drink with admiration as two of the finest minds in all the Empire wrestled with the complex problem. "Odd, though," Homes added, "that there has been no mention of this in the newspapers."

"If not, there soon will be," Criscroft said, and continued. "Our best brains in the department have studied the matter and have come to the conclusion that these objects are either extra-terrestrial, or that they are not."

"A reasonable assumption," Homes remarked, nodding, "and one with which I should tend to agree."

"Quite. On the one hand, if they are extra-terrestrial, we should like to know if they pose a threat of any sort to our beloved England. If they are not, of course, we should like to know if they pose a threat of any sort to our beloved England."

"Ah! I see the problem," Homes said, peering at his brother over tented fingers. "My suggestion would be that the first step should be an attempt to identify these flying objects."

"Precisely!" Criscroft said, and came to his feet, looking relieved. "I was sure you would see right to the heart of the matter, Schlock. I assume you are free to accept this commission?"

"Of course! I would not miss it for the world, or even for the *Daily Express!* If you will leave your address with Dr. Watney, here—I mean, I shall get back to you either at the Foreign Office or at your club as soon as I have some definite information for you."

"Her Majesty shall be most appreciative," Criscroft said with gratitude and was about to take his departure when Homes held him back.

"One thing," Homes inquired. "Exactly where have these unidentified flying objects been seen?"

"Anywhere and everywhere," Criscroft said heavily, and stamped from the room.

"Anywhere and Everywhere, eh?" Homes murmured and repaired to his atlas. "Ah! Anywhere is a small village in Surrey, while Everywhere is a hamlet in Sussex. It will mean a bit of travelling,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but no matter. Your Bradshaw, if you will, Watney, while I don more suitable raiment, and we shall be off—the game's afoot!"

Our first stop was at the little village of Anywhere, in Surrey, and as we climbed down from the train I was pleased to see Homes had that look of fierce concentration, the pursed forehead, the wrinkled nose, the general look of distaste that he often assumed when he was either faced with a hot scent or an unpleasant one. I was about to comment on it, but Homes had already pushed his way through the barrier and was speaking to the attendant.

"Flyin' objects?" that worthy was replying to Homes's query. "We got bats, o' course, but them ain't unidentified. Them got wings attached to they bodies. You can tell 'em right away. And we got birds, o' course, but while most o' them's unidentified as far as I'm concerned, old Mrs. Broome can identify 'em in a hurry. And you'm don't need no identification for our'm mosquitoes, you can tell 'em in a second."

"Little help there," Homes observed as we walked away, leaving the man staring after us and scratching his head. "Still, there must have been something in common between this town and Everywhere, in Sussex, to have made them the common target of these unidentified flying objects. Let us take a walk and make a study of this pleasant little village, after which we can repair to Everywhere and make a comparison to see what they have in common."

I could see very little in Anywhere different from any other village its size I had been unfortunate enough to have visited in the past. There was, of course, the village pub, but as I headed toward it to see if it might conform to any pubs we might later discover in Everywhere, Homes had taken my arm and was piloting me down the street in the opposite direction. We passed the mandatory post office, the village green, the police station, the cinema, the greengrocer's, the church with its rectory, the stationer's shop that undoubtedly sold stamps and journals; they were all standard establishments in almost every village in England.

Homes's efforts to elicit information on the strange objects from the taciturn natives we met led to no more success than we had encountered with the station attendant. Still, when we had completed our excursion and had returned to the railway platform to continue our journey, I was surprised to see a faint look of satisfaction on Homes's saturnine features.

"Homes!" I said, properly interpreting that self-satisfied expres-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sion. "What have you seen here that could possibly lead you to a solution to this case?"

"It is too early to say," said he in his usual insufferable manner when he has noted something that has clearly passed me by. "Possibly after our visit to Everywhere we shall be in a position to draw some definite conclusions."

We sat in silence in the train going to Sussex, Homes wreathed in smoke from his briar which he had packed with Rasura de Lápiz, a new mixture sent him by a former client in Spain in appreciation of my friend's efforts on his behalf, while I sat and stared from the car window, unaware of the passing villages, all undoubtedly with police station, church, rectory, and all the other accoutrements of English country living. I wondered exactly what Homes had seen in Anywhere that I had failed to see, what there might possibly have been to see that anyone else could have failed to see. It was quite frustrating, and it was in that same frustrating silence that we descended at Everywhere and proceeded to duplicate our previous actions at Anywhere, in Surrey.

There was the same greengrocer's as I had known there would be, the same cinema with what seemed to be the same advert outside, the same village green, the same church with what appeared to be the same rectory, the same stationer's, the same police station, even the same village pub from which Homes steered me in precisely the same way.

"Homes," I said, "we have come in a circle and are in the same village."

"No, no, Watney!" said he. "This is quite another place in another shire."

"Then we would have best remained in Anywhere and seen everything twice. In that way we would have saved ourselves the journey here."

"Oh, I don't know, Watney," Homes replied, his eyes twinkling. "I feel our visit here may, in the end, prove the basis for the solution to this problem."

"Homes!" I said reproachfully. "You know something I do not know!"

"Probably several things," he remarked with a smile. "Even some pertaining to this case."

"But what, Homes?" I cried.

He paused to look at his pocket watch and then spoke quietly, quite as if he were answering my question. "I suggest we return to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

London, Watney. With any luck we shall wrap this matter up to-night. Tell me, did you put this morning's journal in the trash before we left?"

"No, Homes," I said, and then added curiously, "but what difference would it make? There was nothing in this morning's paper regarding unidentified flying objects."

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy," was Homes's strange reply.

"Homes," I said, hurt to the quick at his poor memory. "My name is John. Horatio is my cousin. Are you feeling well?"

"Never better," said he, his eyes twinkling once again, and would say no more as we rode back to London, preferring to stare from the train window pursuing his own thoughts, while I wondered how Homes had managed to confuse me with my cousin.

Arriving at Victoria, Homes hailed a hansom and minutes later we were once again within the confines of our quarters. There he instantly picked up the morning journal I had discarded at Criscroft's arrival, and began to turn the pages feverishly. At last he paused and I heard him give a satisfied sigh.

"Homes!" I cried. "What is it?"

He looked at me, his expression a subtle cross between the enigmatic and the arcane. "Tell me, Watney," said he. "How would you like to take in the cinema to-night?"

"Homes!" I said reproachfully. "Her Majesty is undoubtedly awaiting with anxiety your report. Your brother Criscroft may even have foregone his weekly Bingo in order to remain available for your answer to this grave problem. How can you think of visiting the cinema at a time like this?"

"Easily," he replied, no muscle on his face moving. "Will you join me or not?"

"Will there be a Tom and Jerry?" I asked.

"It is a possibility."

"Then I shall come," I said, for it had occurred to me that Homes might have some purpose other than pure entertainment for his decision to attend the cinema.

The cinema Homes had chosen to visit was in the neighbourhood and within minutes we found ourselves seated in the darkness and watching the announcement of the programme. I was pleased to see that after we had suffered the main feature there would be, indeed, a Tom and Jerry, but before I could comment the feature film had begun. As I watched my eyes widened.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Homes!" I whispered. "The unidentified flying objects!"

"Precisely," he replied, and came to his feet. "Come, we have seen all we need to see."

"But, Homes," I objected as quietly as I could, "what about the Tom and Jerry?"

"They will have to do without us," he said abruptly, and was already pushing his way through to the aisle. There was nothing I could do but follow. At the front of the cinema Homes paused and studied the sheet that advertised the film—the same sheet, I now recalled, that had graced the cinemas in both Anywhere and Everywhere, and which Homes had noted and which I had not.

I was on the verge of congratulating him on his perspicacity when he stepped into the street and hailed a hansom. Thoroughly confused at this point, I could only follow him into the cab and listen to him give our jehu an address I did not recognise.

"Homes," I said as he sat back, his expression unfathomable, "I do not understand any of this. Where are we going? What were those flying objects we have just seen? And why are they unidentified?"

"They shall not be unidentified for long," he replied grimly. "This business shall end to-night, Watney." Nor would he say any more until we had drawn up before a building I had never seen before. As we got down I saw a sign over the entrance. I read *UKRAINIAN LODGE*. More puzzled than ever, I followed Homes inside and waited as he asked for a name I had never heard before. There was a brief delay and then we found ourselves in the presence of a man who looked faintly familiar. Suddenly I recognised him as one of the faces I had just seen on the cinema screen.

"Is there some place we can speak in private?" Homes asked the man.

The man nodded and led us into a small cubicle. Once there he waited until we were seated, then seated himself, and stared at my friend with a worried expression on his face.

"What can I do for you, gentlemen?" he asked.

Homes came right to the point. "My name is Schlock Homes," he said, "and you are one of the Flying Waluskis, are you not?"

The man paled. "How did you know?" he whispered.

"You gave me trapeze lessons at one time, but no matter. You have been acting in pictures lately, have you not? Together with some of the younger members of your troupe?"

Waluski could only nod miserably. "We did it for charity. The money all went to help orphans. We did not keep a penny."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I am aware of that, and you deserve full credit for it. But my question is quite another. Why did you do it without having your name on the programme?"

Waluski looked about, even though we were alone, and unconsciously lowered his voice.

"Mr. Homes," he said earnestly, "myself and the other members of my family are in this country without permission. Were you to denounce us to the authorities, we should be deported to the Ukraine. Were that to happen we should be doomed to do our act in circuses, and nothing more. Mr. Homes, two of my sons are allergic to bears . . ." He allowed his words to trail to significant silence.

Homes came to his feet and placed a sympathetic hand on the man's shoulder.

"Worry not, Mr. Waluski," he said, his tone warm with understanding. "I shall say nothing of the matter. I only hope the time comes when you can be given the credit you deserve both for your kind deeds and your remarkable acrobatic skills. However," he added, his voice becoming a trifle stern, "I must ask you to refrain from any future flying until your position in this country becomes legalised, as your performance has led to unneeded perturbation among certain government agencies in our beloved England."

"I promise," Waluski said brokenly, and he would have kissed Homes's two hands had we not already been on our way down the stairs.

As we stood at the kerb trying to wave down a hansom, Homes turned to me.

"I would appreciate your advising Criscroft that there is no threat at all in the unidentified flying objects, Watney, and that I consider the matter closed."

"I shall do so as soon as we are in our quarters," I promised. "But tell me, Homes, what led you to the solution of this complex affair in the first place?"

"The posters before the cinema in both Anywhere and Everywhere," he replied. "It has been many years since I have seen *Peter Pan,* and then just on the stage, but the memory of that fine bit of work has always remained."

Our activities of the previous evening having kept us from our beds to a rather late hour, it was past ten when Homes made his appearance at the breakfast table. He sat down, helped himself to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a large portion of the grilled curries, and looked at me inquiringly across the table.

"I see you have your nose in the morning journal as usual, Watney," said he. "I hope you are able to unearth some small bit of malfeasance upon which we might practice our rusting skills."

"I'm afraid not, Homes," I replied, reading further into the article that had caught my attention. "However, there is this: it says here that U.F.O.'s have also been sighted in the former colony of New York."

"It is truly wonderful what those Ukrainians are doing for their orphans!" Homes said warmly. "A telegram to the New York chapter of their lodge offering our congratulations, if you will, Watney!"

DETECTIVERSE

FATHER SHERLOCK

by AUBREY DAVIDSON

(With apologies to Lewis Carroll)

"You are old, my dear Sherlock," the young doctor said,
"And your mind is all twisted and queer;
And I know jolly well that you're weak in the head—
You've been odd since the Valley of Fear."

"In my youth, Dr. Watson," replied Sherlock Holmes,
"My brain reached the pitch of perfection;
And thus it annoys me that your silly tomes
Earn more money than all my detection."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You are old," said the doctor, "you've got two flat feet
And your limbs are all palsied and numb.
You haven't been able to leave Baker Street
Since the case of the Engineer's Thumb."

"In my youth," the detective replied to the doc,
"I was chased by the Baskerville Hound;
And the muscular spasm brought on by the shock
Left my whole constitution unsound."

"Now, Sherlock," said Watson, "it gives me great pain
When you scrape on your fiddle each night;
And still you incessantly take to cocaine—
Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

Said the 'tec to the doctor, "I now know it's true
You were always a knave and a varlet.
In addition to which you have not had a clue
Since we met for a Study in Scarlet."

Replied Dr. Watson, "It's quite plain to see
That our friendship you're trying to spoil.
Be fair and remember your fame's due to me
By permission of A. Conan Doyle."

"I've solved three-pipe problems," screamed Holmes, "and it galls
To see you so hale and so hearty.
I should have thrown *you* down the Reichenbach Falls
Instead of that fool Moriarty."

© *1980 by Aubrey Davidson.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

An incident on the moor . . .

THE ADVENTURE OF THE HARE APPARENT

by HAL CHARLES

In accordance with our arrangement, I met my friend at the edge of Lord Burnham's wood at first light. Attired in his favourite close-fitting cloth cap and grey travelling cloak, he was carrying the Winchester rifle which had been a gift from an American gentleman at the successful conclusion of some recent business.

"Punctual as ever, my dear fellow," he said, "but—"

"Shall we get on with the hunt? It is not every day that Lord Burnham opens his well-stocked preserve and gives us complete and total free rein."

"*That* is precisely what we first need to talk about," my friend said.

"My tendency towards redundancy?"

"Not quite," said he. "Your predilection for exaggeration. We have neither *complete* nor *total* nor *free* rein. We are, in fact, after only one species—rabbit. Likewise, I have recently been perusing some copies of a certain popular magazine to which you contribute."

I could not stop myself from coughing.

He continued, "I cannot deny those . . . adventures, as you call them, happened, but must you use so much hyperbole?"

At a loss as to how to respond, I looked around for some distraction, when suddenly my eye observed one of our quarry.

"There!" I pointed.

Expert marksman that he was, my friend quickly drew the weapon to his cheek and pulled the trigger.

"By Jove, you got him!" I exclaimed. "He must be a yard long."

"That," he called back, already moving towards the thicket hastily, "is exactly what I was just saying." He picked up the creature. "A yard long! Come, Watson, the game's a foot!"

© 1980 by Hal Charles.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

FLORENCE V. MAYBERRY

Why did she keep dreaming about this man she never knew? . . . Another haunted and haunting story of great perception and insight from Florence V. Mayberry . . .

THE GIRL DOWNSTAIRS

by FLORENCE V. MAYBERRY

DAILY JOURNAL, *December 11, 1980*

He walked beside me down a long dim street, our steps synchronized, fitted, same pace, belonging to each other. His head tipped toward me and he smiled at me. He was so beautiful, brown partly from the sun, partly from his natural coloring. His black hair was unruly, curling—even the hair showing through his open shirt was black and curly. Jeans were tight on his long lean flanks. The muscles on his arms pushed against his rolled-up sleeves. Tall. Beautiful.

He was talking to me, I felt the rush of its sound against me—no words, only sound. But I thought I knew what he was saying and wanted to answer, yes, yes, I'll go wherever you go, do whatever you want. But my words wouldn't come out. Besides, even in the dream I was afraid he might only be wanting to know what street, what town is this, who are you? But if it were only that, why did he hold my hand, keep step with me, keep smiling so sweetly?

The dimness of the street increased, and in its mist we floated to the rhythm of his lovely, wordless sounds. I looked up at him, my face reaching for his. He took me in his arms and we slowly danced, down, down this unknown street. From somewhere came music, slow, then quickening, faster, faster! We spun dizzily. Then we were running, running somewhere.

Abruptly the street ended upon an awful emptiness. His hand

© 1980 by Florence V. Mayberry.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pulled from mine. His face lost its smile, became an empty face that never knew me. He pushed me. I fell, trying to scream, my voice throttled, strangling in its effort to escape.

I woke up, covered with perspiration.

December 12, 1980

Mr. Julius Petrocelli
General Delivery
New York, N.Y.
Dear Mr. Petrocelli:

You don't know me and of course I don't know you. That is, personally. I only know you through Evelyn Miller. As far as that goes I never really knew Evelyn while you were here in Reno even though I lived in the apartment directly beneath hers. It was only after you left Reno that I knew her, and you. She talked a lot about you. Well, really, she told me everything about you.

So from all the things she said about what was between you and her I think someone ought to let you know what happened.

Evelyn killed herself night before last. She left a note for you and the newspaper reporters got hold of it, so it was printed in the papers. Of course it wasn't much of a note. It just said, "Dear Jule, I love you." That's all. No address, no signature. Of course she couldn't have put an address on it, could she? She told me you didn't leave one. Only said you came from New York and would probably go back there. Right after you left all of a sudden without telling her, she wrote to you at your Reno address and marked the envelope *Please forward.* But it was returned to her because you didn't leave any forwarding address. That was over two months ago.

The way Evelyn died, she took a lot of sleeping tablets.

Sincerely,
The Girl Downstairs

DAILY JOURNAL, *December 13, 1980*

The same dream came again last night after I wrote to Julius. With the same ending. This time it frightened me even more and I woke up screaming. Not loud enough to bother anyone in the other apartments because the sound, thank goodness, was muffled by the blanket I pulled with me to the floor. I struggled with it, terrified, afraid that somehow Julius had reached after me into that black void and was strangling me.

Why do I keep dreaming about this man I never knew? Because

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I learned so much about him from Evelyn? But I never dream about Evelyn.

If I dream it again tonight I'll ask him right in the dream, why are you trying to kill me after you've already caused Evelyn to die—you don't even know I exist. Leave me alone if you have to make the dream end that way!

It's a very real dream. It's hard to believe it is a dream.

December 16, 1980

Mr. Julius Petrocelli
General Delivery
New York, N.Y.
Dear Mr. Petrocelli:

This may seem silly to you. When I think about it in the daytime it seems silly to me too. Except, well, I work for a doctor and there are a lot of psychology magazines lying around the reception room and when there is a slack time I read them and some of the articles say that some psychiatrists believe there is a great deal to extra-sensory perception and things like that. Like mind-reading and being able to see in dreams something that happens on the other side of the world, or prophesying something before it happens. Dream symbols and so on. I mean, like dreams can be reflections of what goes on in this world.

So I have to tell you, Mr. Petrocelli—I keep dreaming about you and you are frightening me in them. You keep trying to kill me in them.

I expect it's because you had so much to do with Evelyn's death. Actually, you killed her even though you left Reno three months ago and she died only a few days ago. Because Evelyn really loved you. She cried for a solid week after you left, had to stay home sick from work. It was around then that she began to speak to me when we met in the hall, and I saw her eyes all red. Before that we would pass each other maybe saying hi, or it's a windy day, or some dumb nothing. The entrance hall of our apartment house is pretty small, as you well know—it isn't conducive to standing around visiting. Besides, I never have been good at getting to know people. There's a couple upstairs who live across the hall from Evelyn's apartment but all I know about them are their names, Jack and Sadie Altheimer. And Harvey Stevens in the back apartment downstairs who works a night shift in one of the gambling clubs who says hi when he sees me and I say hi and that's that. The other people in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

building are new, I don't even know their names.

Perhaps you can tell. I'm a loner. Keep to myself, stay home a lot, reading and doing crossword puzzles. I never even bought myself a TV, I just like to be quiet. Which is how I always knew when you visited Evelyn. This building has a crazy front entrance door that gives a wheezy squeak, real loud, as it shuts. The pressure thing on it to keep it from slamming does that. Since I'm in the only apartment downstairs near the door and it isn't too noisy I've never complained to the landlord about it. So that's how I always know when anyone comes in or goes out. Usually just for something to do I open my door a crack to see who it is.

I always saw you as you ran upstairs to visit Evelyn.

And I always heard when you left. I'm a light sleeper and I would hear the front door wheeze and squeak even though you had tiptoed down the stairs and across the hall. Naturally, living alone, I'm a little nervous about movement in the house at night, especially at three or four in the morning. So I would get up, look out my front window, and see you walking fast toward Virginia Street.

Mr. Petrocelli, all those late visits, you know, that lasted so long, that is why Evelyn died. Of course you can't be arrested or anything like that. But I think you are responsible. What do you think?

Back to those dreams I have. They're so strong and real I can't help feeling they have some kind of power. So if you are dreaming about me, please stop. You are frightening me. In those dreams you try to kill me. They may be only dreams. I've told you they are dreams. But if they keep up, maybe in some crazy way one of them could become real.

Sincerely,
The Girl Downstairs

December 17, 1980

Mr. Julius Petrocelli
General Delivery
New York, N.Y.
Dear Sir:

In the letter I wrote yesterday I forgot to tell you what I look like so you'll know if I'm the one you are dreaming about if you are also having that terrible dream which came again last night. If you are not dreaming it, maybe it will be of interest to you anyway what I look like.

I am sort of medium height, very slim, ash brown hair, pale skin.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I don't like rouge, it has a bold look, anyway I think it does on me. If you happened to have seen me as you went up those stairs I was probably wearing beige or brown because those colors go so well with my hair. I guess there is nothing extraordinary about me except for my eyes. They really are unusual, everyone who notices them says so. They are large and yellow. Honestly. Yellow amber. The kids at school used to tease me, say I had cat's eyes. Their color is why I like beige and brown too.

Of course, running up the stairs as fast as you always did, I suppose you wouldn't have noticed.

So that's what I look like if you see some girl in your dreams. However, if you're getting my letters I expect it's Evelyn you dream about.

After you left Reno and I began getting a little acquainted with her from meeting her in the hall, one night I heard her walking and walking around her apartment. One room to the other. Then her bed creaked as though she had thrown herself on it. Then walk, walk again. You can hear practically everything from her apartment in mine, like I always heard when you visited Evelyn. Not what you said, of course, but everything else. When you two laughed and sometimes danced, and when everything got quiet. I always knew when you left too even though you shut the door carefully and tiptoed down the stairs. Two of those stair steps squeak and there was always the wheeze of the lobby door going shut.

That night, the one I'm telling you about now, Evelyn walked and walked. I could even hear her crying. So I went to bed, hoping I could go to sleep—I didn't want to hear her cry. I know about crying when you're alone. Usually you finally get exhausted and fall asleep. I prayed she would hurry up, get tired and stop before she started me at it.

Only she didn't. She kept walking and crying. Once in a while she'd moan. I almost got up and went to see if she was sick and needed help. But she could have thought I was just nosy. Finally I fell asleep.

The knocking at my door brought me instantly out of sleep. I sat up, frightened, turned on the light, looked at my alarm clock. It was just after two. I opened my door a crack, then wider. Evelyn stood there in her nightgown and robe, holding her arm out toward me, blood soaking a scarf around her left wrist.

"I've cut myself," she said. She was pale as a ghost and her mouth was trembling. "Your car—can you take me to the hospital?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I drew her inside to a chair and ran for my coat. I put it on, found my car keys, then ran back for a towel because the blood was spilling on the floor and she was getting whiter and whiter. I led her to the parking lot and drove fast to the hospital, where the doctor sewed her up. He wanted to keep her overnight but she refused. So I drove her back home and stayed with her the rest of the night.

That's when she began to tell me about you. And I told her I already knew about you spending so much time with her. Then she told me a whole lot more.

It was a real sad story, Mr. Petrocelli.

Because she was so restless and still couldn't sleep, I gave her one of the tranquilizer tablets my doctor boss gives me for when I can't relax. I seem quiet on the outside but actually I'm real keyed up inside. Anyway, she did relax and went to sleep. On account of it was so late I turned off her alarm clock so she wouldn't wake up next morning to get ready for work. I called her school where she taught and explained that her hand was cut severely while she was cooking dinner and the doctor ordered her to stay in bed for a day. Then I wrote Evelyn a note telling her what I had said so she'd stay home and not mess up the excuse. Then I went to work.

There's still blood on my car seat. I'll have to get seat covers. Every time I get in my car and see those spots I think about what you did to Evelyn. You ought to think a lot about those blood spots too.

Mr. Petrocelli, you already know this because Evelyn said you did. But now you'll know somebody else knows too. Evelyn was pregnant. That's why you ran away so fast right after you got your divorce. The same day, in fact. No goodbye, no address. You just left.

Of course, I expect Evelyn isn't grieving any more. She's dead.

Sincerely,
The Girl Downstairs

DAILY JOURNAL
December 19, 1980

I thought that awful dream would stop, that writing to him would make it go away—would make me realize how cruel he was and how far away he is, make even my subconscious realize that I would never again see him going up the stairs at night or coming down again in early morning.

He never really saw me. Maybe he saw kind of a blur of a person,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but not really me. He never saw my eyes. I'm not beautiful, but my eyes are. I wish he had looked into them. But he never said hello, or good evening.

Men don't see me, I mean really *see* me. Why? Why! I may be plain but I'm not ugly!

Grandma always said it's not good to be too pretty, if you are the angels will take you away too soon like they did your mama. Then Grandma would cry, because my beautiful mother died when I was three. So when I was real young I got afraid of being pretty and maybe I helped myself to be plain, I don't know. But I'm not ugly.

Evelyn was beautiful and look what happened to her.

Julius is beautiful. Handsome, I mean. Exactly the kind of man I've always made up in daydreams. But at night all I have are those crazy dreams that start out so wonderful and end up with him trying to kill me.

December 20, 1980

Mr. Julius Petrocelli
General Delivery
New York, N.Y.
Dear Mr. Petrocelli:

I would really like to write "Dear Julius," but I expect that's too forward since you don't know me. That is, in real life. But that dreadful dream still comes every night and in it you are still trying to kill me. Last night it was a little different. Instead of pushing me into terrible black space as always before, you choked me. I woke up strangling, fighting the bedcovers, and had to get up and walk and walk. Just like I used to hear Evelyn walk after you left. It frightened me so much I had to take one of my tranquilizer tablets. But I've built up a resistance to those by now, so it didn't work and I had to take a sleeping tablet. Like Evelyn had. She didn't take one, of course. She took a whole bottle full.

The first part of the dream is lovely. The part where you take me in your arms and we dance, swaying to music that you can't hear, only feel. Such a beautiful, mystic feeling. As though you love me.

Then you start killing me.

Mr. Petrocelli, you shouldn't have made Evelyn pregnant and then run away. She worried terribly that she'd lose her job teaching school. We talked a lot about that. You see, even here in Reno parents are fussy about the personal lives of the schoolteachers, particularly in grade school which is where Evelyn taught. Lots of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the parents here are all worked up about moral laxity, and why not in a wide-open town like Reno? I had to agree with Evelyn about that. And did you know she had no family to turn to for help? Only cousins she scarcely knew. She really was in a fix and there was no sense in my lying to her about it and saying she wasn't.

She really agonized about what she could do all alone with a baby to take care of. She wanted the baby, she really did, she never had any thought of an abortion. She loved that baby because it was yours and hers. Of course, the baby died with her but I suppose she thought if they died together they'd be with each other forever. Whereas in this world she would probably have had to adopt it out to strangers and never see it again.

We got to be awfully good friends. She said she didn't know what she'd do without my understanding and sympathy. Maybe it will ease your conscience a little to know she had a friend at the end.

Sincerely,
The Girl Downstairs

December 24, 1980

Mr. Julius Petrocelli
General Delivery
New York, N.Y.
Dear Julius:

I guess I can finally say that. Dear Julius, I mean, because if you get these letters you know that I know an awful lot about you. I really feel I know you.

It's Christmas Eve. I have a sweet little tree on my coffee table with tinsel on it, a tiny doll at the top for an angel, and miniature toys tied on it with red ribbons. I decorated it a few days ago and it's been so nice to come home at night from the office and see it waiting for me—just as though it's going to be a real fun Christmas with family or friends or someone around who belongs to me.

Loneliness is worse at a holiday time like Christmas. Except for Evelyn I didn't have any close friends. I'm shy, it's hard for me to make friends. Oh yes, I guess I already told you that, I don't want to bore you. Anyway, I wish I could have been friends sooner with Evelyn. What do you know—maybe if I had, you and I could even have been introduced to each other!

For Christmas dinner tomorrow I bought a roast chicken from the delicatessen. And potato salad and a fruit cake. It should be real Christmasy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Evelyn told me what you and she had planned for this Christmas. Or possibly she planned it and just told you about it. But if you did plan it with her and were just kidding her along, I imagine you feel pretty lousy about it now. That is, if you are getting my letters.

Evelyn believed you and she would be married long before Christmas—in fact, immediately after you got your divorce. She told me she had planned to have a Christmas tree with toys beneath it. On account of the baby. And that she was going to cook a small turkey, dressing and everything. She loved to cook. And pumpkin pie because you didn't like mince pie. I told her I'd be happy to share Christmas dinner with her to help her through a day I knew would make her feel awful being left alone after planning so much on it. I said I'd buy the turkey and do the washing up. I'm no cook. She cried, but tried to smile and said that was kind because she knew how terrible a day it would be.

Just think, that was only two weeks ago.

Fondly,
The Girl Downstairs

December 24, 1980

Mr. Julius Petrocelli
General Delivery
New York, N.Y.
Dear Julius:

This is my second letter tonight. I have already mailed the first. But I have to tell you this because I think about it all the time. Besides, it probably won't really matter because I don't think you're getting my letters and just some clerk in the dead-letter office is reading them. I don't know him and he'll never know me, so I'll say it.

I love you. I fell in love with you the first time I saw you walking up those stairs.

I remember exactly how you looked. Blue jeans and a flowered shirt. No coat or sweater. Your shirt was open at the neck and the hair on your chest was thick and curled like the hair on your head. You looked like you were wearing a cap of thick dark curls. You turned toward the sound of my door opening and it was startling to see how blue your eyes were. I expected them to be dark like your complexion and your hair. You only stared through me as though I wasn't there and went on upstairs two at a time like you could hardly wait to get there.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I had been on my way to the movies, but I turned back inside my apartment. My heart pounded. My mouth was dry. Crazy fool, I told myself. A stranger on the stairs and you lose your mind—don't be an idiot. But I kept standing by my door, waiting, opening it a crack each time I heard any sound, waiting for you to come down again. I knew you didn't live here.

It wasn't a long wait. Pretty soon you returned with Evelyn hanging onto your arm. Other nights, well, I would have to wait and wait. But that night you two went out someplace. So I knew then that you were the boy friend of the girl who lived above me.

Can't you remember just a little how that girl downstairs always opened her door just as you started up the stairs? Didn't you notice at all? Surely you must remember there was a girl who lived downstairs.

Evelyn was really pretty. But I'm not homely. I wanted so much for you to see me. But if you did, you didn't act like it. You just kept running upstairs to see Evelyn.

This will sound silly. I know that. But I was jealous of Evelyn.

Well, there, I've said it. I love you.

The Girl Downstairs

December 26, 1980

Mr. Julius Petrocelli
General Delivery
New York, N.Y.
Dearest Julius:

Christmas is over. I had the roast chicken, cranberry sauce, everything just as I planned. But I couldn't eat the potato salad or the cake. Truth is, I didn't really enjoy the chicken. I wasn't hungry. Beside the Christmas tree there was a stuffed dog I bought for your baby that will never be born. Sitting at the table looking at it while I ate didn't help my appetite.

Actually, Christmas was awful. I couldn't stop thinking about Evelyn. She really was a nice girl. That should be enough to stop me being jealous of her, but it isn't. After all, you had loved her, or at least gone through the motions of love.

Once a boy in the eighth grade said he loved me. But when we got in high school all of a sudden he seemed older and I stayed young like I was still in grade school. He started going with another girl, you know, real boy-girl stuff. After that I never had a real boy friend. And I never cared a lot.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Well, I might as well be honest—why not? I did care. But only in general, not for any particular person. Until I saw you. Why, I don't know. Oh, maybe I do know. Because even as a kid I used to make up men for myself in daydreams, until finally I made up a special kind. When I saw you, you were exactly that kind. My whole insides used to hurt watching you go up the stairs to Evelyn. And hurt worse waiting so long each night for you to leave.

There was never any Evelyn in my daydreams. Just me and the man who looked like you.

After you left Reno and Evelyn, I couldn't stop thinking about you. Then I found out she had the baby and I didn't have anything. Can you imagine how that felt? Empty. Collapsed. Zero. But of course you can't.

I kept visiting Evelyn as soon as I got home from work at night, sympathizing with the poor girl. It seemed to comfort her when I told her I realized how lonely and lost it must be to lose the one you loved, to never see him again, to be on one's own with people talking behind your back because your baby had no father. Poor dear, she couldn't seem to stop crying. She would try to smile and then the least thing I said she would start all over again. Her face got all puffy, not really pretty any more and the other teachers at her school started asking questions.

I begged her to relax, to sleep. I said perhaps she could forget the awful situation if she would only sleep—blank out, you know, find peace.

I brought her the sleeping tablets. The doctor I work for gave me a prescription because I was nervous and hadn't been sleeping. I think he forgot he had given me an earlier prescription, I've been working for him a long time. Besides, he has samples and I help in his lab as well as act as receptionist.

I brought them to Evelyn and she took the whole bottle. I know because I brought her the glass of water and watched her.

So whoever is reading this letter, tell on me. Go tell the authorities. It will be too late to hurt me. I've got another bottle.

Darling Julius, did you ever think you'd be killing two women?

Dearest love, goodbye,
The Girl Downstairs

P.S. I kept copies of every letter I sent you. I suppose the reporters will get hold of them too.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* Raffles story by

BARRY PEROWNE

On the formal entry of America into the "War to End Wars," the Escadrille Lafayette was incorporated into the United States Expeditionary Force commanded by General John Pershing, and the arrival "Over There" of the doughboys marked the turning point of the war.

Before the turning point, however, the group of American aviators who would be known as the Escadrille Lafayette when censorship permitted mention of them had found its way unofficially to France, mostly by way of Canada, and was training with the French military aviation. Meet several of those adventurous souls now, as encountered by A. J. Raffles, the famous gentleman burglar, and his chronicler-in-crime, Bunny Manders, who have been taken from the trenches to be put to better use in clandestine intelligence work and aviation . . .

RAFFLES AND THE BOX 4 DRAMA

by BARRY PEROWNE

"With effect forthwith: 2/Lt. Manders to report to the undersigned, collect pass and travel warrant, and proceed on home leave."

It was a grey day, "Somewhere in France," early on in the second dismal year of the "War to End Wars," and the scribbled order, signed by the battalion adjutant, was brought up the communication trench to me by a mudstained runner.

Leave? This was utterly unexpected. With a Big Push rumoured

© 1980 by Barry Perowne.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to be imminent, I could hardly believe my luck.

Even when, via the Transit Camp at Boulogne and the crowded cross-Channel steamer, I arrived in London late in the afternoon of the next day but one, I still was haunted by a ghastly fear that some mistake had been made.

From Charing Cross Station I took one of the few surviving hansoms directly to my Mount Street flat, where I lost no time in getting out of my insanitary khaki and into the nude.

Immersed in the almost forgotten luxury of a hot bath, with a whisky-and-soda in my soapy hand, I began at last to relax. The only fly in the ointment of my bliss was that I could not think of any lovely lady I knew who might be free, at such short notice, to help me celebrate my first evening on leave.

I was sipping my whisky and meditating on the problem when, suddenly, my doorbell rang.

With a twinge of apprehension, for only my battalion knew that I was likely to be home, I wrapped a bath towel around me and padded with wet feet across my living-room carpet into my small lobby.

On the doormat lay a letter.

I picked it up. On the envelope my name and the words *By Hand* and *Immediate* were typewritten. With growing anxiety, I tore open the envelope and took out a slip of pink paper.

Rubberstamped with the day's date, the pink slip was a reservation for Box 4, Wyndham's Theatre, Leicester Square, at 8:30 P.M.

There was nothing else in the envelope.

Relieved that I was not being recalled to duty, I was nevertheless puzzled—but only for a moment. Then it flashed upon me that a delightful person I knew, whose name was Caroline and who had been in her year a much admired debutante, had patriotically taken a course in typewriting and had now a duration job at the War Office, where she collated Strength Returns. Undoubtedly, on one of them from my division, she would have seen my name marked "On Leave," with the relevant dates.

My problem for the evening was solved. Elated, I kissed the pink slip, put it on the table, and, clutching my toga about me, padded into the bedroom to look at my watch. It was almost 7 P.M.

My charlady, who had promised to look in now and then and see to my things during my absence, had been as good as her word, and I found all the Savile Row suits in my wardrobe well brushed and presentable.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Eschewing white tie and tails as probably not in the best of taste in wartime, I chose a suit which, I recollected, Caroline once had said she particularly liked on me, and—happy to be in mufti again—I walked round to Piccadilly Circus.

Though searchlight beams were roaming and crisscrossing high overhead, probing the sky for Zeppelins, the undaunted flower-women still sat, as of old, beside their big baskets on the steps of the Eros statue, and I bought for Caroline a corsage of violets.

Inhaling their dewy scent, I walked across Leicester Square to Wyndham's Theatre, where, in the foyer, I bought a box of chocolates and presented my pink slip to a pretty attendant with a big bow in her hair.

"What's the play like?" I asked her, as she conducted me up the carpeted staircases.

"Well, sir, it's coming off at the end of the week to make way for a new one that's in rehearsal, but it's had a very good run," she said.

She ushered me into Box 4, where I saw that Caroline had not arrived yet. I sat down on one of the gilded, plush-seated chairs and hid the chocolates and violets under it. To melody issuing from the orchestra pit, I was watching the stalls and circle seats filling when I heard the door of the box open, and I rose quickly, ready to feign astonishment at seeing Caroline, but I saw, instead, a total stranger—a gaunt, well dressed, hatchet-faced civilian, who gave me a hard, appraising stare.

" 'Evening," he said curtly.

Taken aback, I responded with equal curtness. I sat down again. To my resentment, for I had counted on having Caroline to myself, the stranger also sat down. His presence, and the critical way he seemed to be looking me over, grated inexpressibly upon me. Fuming, I was about to ask him with a sneer if he were sure he was in the right box, but just then the lights went out, the music died away, and the curtain rose.

With Caroline still not arrived, I couldn't concentrate on the play. The feeble wit of the dialogue and the fatuous guffaws of the audience merely increased my irritation. Once, as the alleged comedy went tediously on and on, I thought I heard the door of the box open. I looked round, hoping to see Caroline tiptoeing in, a finger to her lips, but the door, dimly visible in the obscurity, remained disappointingly shut.

I couldn't make it out. I began to wonder if in fact it *had* been Caroline who had sent me the ticket. If not, then what was going

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on here? My anger increased. I resolved that the moment Act One ended, I would demand an explanation of this stranger in the box.

But he beat me to it. As the curtain at last came down and the lights went up, he rose abruptly from his chair.

"All right," he said, "I've had a look at him. He's your pigeon now." And he left the box. He had spoken as though to some third person, someone behind my left shoulder. Startled, I rose, turning.

A. J. Raffles was standing there.

He must have entered at the moment when I'd fancied I'd heard the door open.

The last time I had seen him had been four months ago, when, in mud-stained khaki, he had been my company commander in the trenches.

Now, an immaculate civilian, his keen face tanned, his crisp dark hair slightly greying, a pearl in his cravat, he seemed amused by my drop-jawed amazement.

"Well, Bunny," he said, "you've just passed a test. That man who's been looking you over is a career secret-service man, a regular, referred to only as O. He wanted a look at you before I put in an appearance. He's a deep man, with his own methods. Hence this Box 4 business. But you heard what he said. "You're my pigeon now. You're to work with me on a job for Section O."

I could only stare.

"Come on," said Raffles, "pick up your chocolates and violets. You can give them to that attendant with the bow in her hair, then we'll dine at our club and I'll explain about this job for O."

He gave me a look I knew well.

"The job's connected with a group of American aviators," he said. "They're stationed in France and are known, or they will be when the censorship permits mention of them, as the Escadrille Lafayette."

Across a field near Lympne, in Kent, early on the following morning, a Sopwith biplane jolted with increasing velocity and, parting company with the grass, heaved itself precariously into the air.

Leather-helmeted, goggled, strapped in the observer's seat of the biplane, which was piloted by Raffles, I was on my way back to France.

This was my first experience of aviation. I did not find it reassuring, even though Raffles, in the cockpit, seemed to know well enough what he was doing.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The previous night, at our club in Pall Mall, he had told me that when he had disappeared without explanation from the trenches four months before it was because in peacetime he had held the captaincy of the England cricket team, an appointment requiring tactical sense, agile reactions, and a knack for bluffing on a low card for high stakes.

"O apparently thought," Raffles said, "that I might be of more use in his section than in the trenches, so he had me sent on a course of instruction in clandestine intelligence work and aviation, which he thinks could be the coming thing in this war. When I'd passed the course, I recommended you as a likely O-type chap. I thought you'd be better off in this sort of work than in the damned trenches, Bunny—and here you are."

Here indeed I was—in mid-air but far from convinced that I was better off for it. I held tensely to the edge of my vibrating seat. But as the Sopwith continued to remain aloft and in relatively level flight, I began to gain some measure of confidence and, as gradually my tension relaxed, I ventured to protrude my head from the fuselage and look downward.

We were high over the Channel. Glittering in the rays of the rising sun, the calm sea down there was dotted with diminutive shipping. So immense was the panorama that my misgivings yielded to a feeling akin almost to exuberance, which the speed of our progress through the air served only to heighten.

Surprisingly soon we passed over the French coast and, with Raffles navigating by map and by air-to-ground observation, continued on inland, bound for the field of the Lafayette aviators. I had not known that Americans were involved in the war, but Raffles had set me right about this.

"I gather from O," he had said, "that certain young Americans, adventurous and air-minded, have found their way unofficially to France, mostly by way of Canada, and have been training with the French military aviation. What President Wilson will say when he hears they're in action is of course none of our business."

Our business, insofar as the aviation phase of our mission was concerned, was simply to deliver the Sopwith to the Lafayette aviators. Apparently, a powerful London newspaper magnate who was privy to many secrets of the war—and was possibly, Raffles thought, the sagacious proprietor of the *Daily Mail*, Lord Northcliffe—had learned of the venturesome Americans, been told they were short of aircraft, and so was sending them one as a free gift.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"He probably thinks it politic," Raffles had commented, "that they should receive British encouragement as well as that of our French allies. Anyway, the matter's been arranged through Section O.When we've delivered the 'plane and got a receipt signed for it, we go on by train, via Paris, to Lyons for the intelligence phase of our mission."

While all this was preoccupying my mind, the suncast shadow of the Sopwith sped over the fields, roads, and meandering rivers of Northern France below us, and it did not seem long before we began to lose height in our approach to a meadow at the farther end of which were hutments and a large, corrugated-iron, barnlike building over which the French flag bravely flew.

Our underwheels made a jolting contact with the ground and, bumping with diminishing speed over the grass, we came to a well judged halt near an aeroplane that stood in front of the barnlike building. Two young men had been watching our descent. Wearing riding-breeches, leggings, and leather aviation tunics, they came to meet us as we climbed out of the Sopwith with our overnight valises. Amiably enough, the American airmen introduced themselves as Charles Nordhoff and James Hall.

"We've been expecting you," said Hall. "Our French commandant had a signal about you, but he's not here right now. He's up on patrol with four of our fellows."

"So this is a Sopwith," said Nordhoff, looking it over. "We've already got a twoseater—that Chameau grounded there. We use it for training. Twoseaters are okay for that, but operationally they're sitting ducks."

"We have five operational 'planes," Hall told us. "They're French singleseaters—Spads, as we call them. We like them fine. But come on over to the mess hut for a drink."

Raffles explained that we had to catch a train to Paris.

"No problem," said Hall. "The nearest town, Pontarlière, is only about ten miles from here. Our truck'll be going there shortly to collect rations and it'll take you along to catch your train."

Over vin rouge in the mess hut, where other aviators, all young fellows, were playing poker, Nordhoff asked us how long we thought the war would last.

"It seems to have got bogged down," he said, "into kind of a stalemate. But when it's all over, Jim and I aim to hightail it for Tahiti, where I've got a relation in the copra business. He says it's a great life by the blue lagoons."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Lovely Polynesian girls comb their hair by the waterfalls," Hall said, "and the surf breaks on the reef."

"We'll drink to that," said Raffles.

But there was an occasionally audible sound—an undertone, a deep intermittent rumbling—that was not surf on remote coral reefs. Coming from the east, where the trenches were not much more than thirty miles away, the rumbling I could hear as we took our leave of the Lafayette aviators was the sullen thunder of the guns.

With the aviation phase of our mission satisfactorily concluded, or so I thought, we dined that night in the restaurant-car of the express train bound south from Paris to Lyons and Marseilles.

We had a table to ourselves, and Raffles explained to me the intelligence phase of our assignment.

"Switzerland, being centrally placed and strictly neutral," he told me, "is inevitably riddled with secret agents of the belligerent powers. It's a clearing-house for intelligence material gathered by the far-flung espionage networks these agents operate from the peaceful Alpine resorts. O, of course, has a trusted agent there. Information he's gathered has been reaching London by way of the diplomatic pouch, but Lord Grey, head of our Foreign Office, has put a stop to that. He's afraid of upsetting the Swiss."

Consequently, Raffles explained, O's agent had taken pains to cultivate the acquaintance of a respected international bank auditor, a Mr. Ralph Beckett.

"He's a regular traveller, on banking business, between Switzerland and London," Raffles said, "and he's well known and *persona grata* to the Swiss. He could be a very valuable courier for O's man. They've played a good deal of bridge together, to their mutual advantage, and I understand that O's man is entrusting Mr. Beckett with a package to take to London on his next trip. He's satisfied himself, of course—being a bank auditor, a cautious profession—that the package is perfectly innocent. It's addressed to some well known commercial concern in London, and the package contains documentary material that has to do merely with the ostensibly legitimate business of O's man in Switzerland."

Raffles refilled my wine glass. The train roared on through the night.

"If the stuff in the package were as innocent as it appears, and as Mr. Beckett believes it to be," Raffles said, "there'd be no need for the precautions that have been taken to protect Mr. Beckett,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

covertly, on his journey through wartime spy-infested France to London."

The bank auditor was expected to travel by his customary route, starting his journey on one of the Swiss steamers that plied the Lake of Geneva.

"Their only port of call on the French side of the lake," Raffles said, "is Thonon-les-Bains. If any enemy agent working in Switzerland should suspect O's man there of being in espionage and of using the respected bank auditor as a courier, there might be an attempt to get at him. Not in Switzerland itself. Agents don't dare risk compromising their cover there, it's too indispensable a center for their activities. If caught, they'd be interned for the duration. No, Bunny, it's from the moment he sets foot on French soil at Thonon that Mr. Beckett could be—though he doesn't himself realize it—in possible danger."

Hence, Raffles explained, the arrangements made to protect the auditor. Section O had two men stationed permanently at Thonon-les-Bains. Their job was to take note of travellers who landed there from the Swiss side of the lake.

"Beckett being a regular traveller," Raffles said, "O's two men at Thonon know the auditor by sight, and I have a photograph of him. He should by now have started on his journey. From Thonon to Lyons, where he has to change trains to get to Paris and onward, O's two men will be keeping him under observation—for his own safety. From Lyons on through Paris to Boulogne and London, you and I become responsible for the safety of Mr. Beckett and his package and O's two men return to their job at Thonon."

It was well after 8 A.M. when we reached Lyons. Section O had telegraphed to reserve rooms for us at the Hotel du Rhône, just across from the station.

"Be ready to move at short notice," Raffles warned me. "O's two men know where to find us. If nothing disastrous has happened so far, one of O's men will get word to us here as soon as they arrive."

In my room I had a wash and a shave and, as I changed my shirt, I could not help thinking how radically the times, too, had changed. Time was when a high-level international bank auditor might have been carrying a package of bearer bonds or other negotiable securities, and our interest in him would have been different from what it was now. Certainly, in our criminal past, Raffles had made it a rule that we never carry weapons. It was not his style. But war was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

different. He had told me to pop my service revolver into my valise, but I thought it advisable now to transfer the Webley .38 to a convenient lodgement in the waistband of my trousers.

Scarcely had I done so than I heard a knock on the door of Raffles's room, adjoining my own. A brief murmur of voices followed, then my door opened and Raffles came in.

"They've just arrived," he said. "I've had word from one of O's men. So far, he tells me, nobody's shown any suspicious interest in Mr. Beckett. He's breakfasting now at the buffet in the station. The train to Paris is due in shortly from Marseilles. Come on!"

Carrying our valises, we walked across to the station. Raffles bought tickets, and, this done, we strolled past the buffet and glanced in through its windows.

"There he is," Raffles murmured. "The man with the newspaper."

Of large build and portly dignified presence, the bank auditor wore a travelling ulster and alpine tweed hat. He was drinking coffee, reading a newspaper through half-lensed glasses, and a valise and a briefcase lay on a chair beside him.

With the war stalemated barely forty miles east of Paris, and a Big Push rumoured to be imminent in that sector, the train, when it came steaming in, was by no means crowded. We saw Mr. Beckett get into a first-class compartment, then we got into one a little further back in the train.

We had our compartment to ourselves. It had white antimacassars with the initials *S.N.C.F.* crocheted on them in red, and there were framed photographs of Haute-Savoie and the snowclad Alps.

Raffles took a stroll along the corridor. Returning, he told me that in Beckett's compartment there were two French Army officers. And when the clanging of a bell sounded, growing louder as a white-jacketed steward came along the corridors, calling, "*Dejeuner, service de dejeuner, messieurs les voyageurs*," the officers and the bank auditor went to the restaurant-car.

We were not far behind them. Sharing a table, the three men were chatting amiably. Nobody went out after them as they left the restaurant-car—and when, after a while and a careful scrutiny of other lunchers in the car, we left it ourselves, we cast a passing glance into Mr. Beckett's compartment.

The two officers were sleeping off their lunch. The bank auditor, his briefcase open on his knees, was putting on his half-lensed glasses as he frowned down at a package that, neatly wrapped and tied, lay on the briefcase and was of about the same size.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We passed on at once to our own compartment.

It was going on nine o'clock and long after dark when the train steamed into Paris and all passengers alighted at the Gare de Lyon. Leaving the station, the bank auditor walked across the busy street and entered a large café. He spoke to a waiter, who nodded impatiently, gesturing toward the rear where a telephone with a tattered directory beside it stood on a shelf adjacent to a door marked MESSIEURS.

"Take a table," Raffles murmured to me, giving me his valise.

Beckett went to the telephone. Raffles walked on past him, pushed open the door marked MESSIEURS, and went in. Beckett unhooked the earpiece of the telephone.

Seeing an unoccupied table, I sat down at it. A waiter came to me. I ordered a cognac. Beckett spoke into the telephone. His portly, dignified figure was in profile to me. He seemed to be waiting for the Exchange to connect his call. My drink came. Beckett was speaking again into the telephone. He said little, then returned the earpiece to its hook, picked up his valise and briefcase, and headed for the exit.

The door marked MESSIEURS opened. Raffles emerged. Looking at me across the café, he made a slight downward gesture, signalling me to remain seated.

Beckett walked out into the street and was gone—and Raffles, rejoining me quickly, told me he had contrived to overhear the bank auditor's telephone call.

"It was to Pontarlière 814, charges reversed," Raffles said, "and he told somebody there, whom he called LeCrom, that he had an urgent job for him, was about to take a taxi to the Gare du Nord to catch a train to Pontarlière, and it was imperative he be met there on arrival." Raffles's grey eyes were hard. "I'm damned if I like this development, Bunny. Pontarlière is that town ten miles from the Lafayette field. Come on, pay for that cognac. We'll take the Metro. It'll get us to the Gare du Nord quicker than Beckett can get there in a taxi."

In a Metro train, reverberating through the tiled tunnels under Paris, we reached the Gare du Nord, where Raffles bought two tickets to Pontarlière and was told by the clerk at the *guichet* that the last train to Pontarlière would leave Platform 12 at 10.40.

Lurking in the shadows of the huge, hollowly echoing Gare du Nord, we watched anxiously for Beckett to arrive, and it was a relief

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

when we saw him come walking in. He went to the ticket *guichet*, then to Platform 12, alongside which a small train—two coaches and a goods wagon—was standing. Beckett boarded the train. So did we, one compartment back from his.

In our compartment were three railwaymen, evidently going on duty, for they had lanterns with them and furled flags, red and green.

It was not a long journey, but the train was slow. At its first stop one of the railwaymen got out. At the second stop another of the railwaymen got out. At the third stop, Pontarlière, the remaining railwayman left the compartment, but we stayed where we were until, after a moment or so, we saw Beckett walk past along the platform. He was heading for the station exit.

"Take my valise, Bunny," Raffles muttered, "and wait for me in the station buffet."

He left me—and, doing as he had told me, I went into the station buffet. Across from its door on the platform side was a window. I looked out through it onto the station forecourt where a solitary vehicle stood waiting. It was a motor van, a one-tonner, and in the dim gaslighting of the forecourt I could make out on the side of the van the legend *Jean LeCrom, Garagiste, Pneus et L'Essence —Pontarlière 814*. A wiry-looking man wearing a belted blue blouse and a leather cap was pacing to and fro beside the van. Evidently the driver, he was smoking a cigarette—which he threw down as Beckett appeared from the station exit.

Beckett ducked into the front seat of the van, the driver cranked the motor to life, then got in behind the wheel. Gears engaged and the van moved off.

It was followed. Raffles was after it. Running fast, he clutched its tailboard with both hands, heaved himself lithely in over it, and vanished into the dark interior.

Rigid, I watched the van's rearlight until it passed from my view.

Evidently for the benefit of nocturnal workers, mostly railwaymen by the look of those who came and went as the hours passed, the buffet remained open all night. Embowered in bottles, an elderly woman sat knitting behind the zinc counter on which an urn steamed over a gas ring.

Sitting at a table by the window that looked out on the forecourt, I drank cup after cup of wartime, chicory-bitter coffee. Outside, the town slept, silent and dark, heedless of a vague, intermittent rum-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bling in the east and of flashes, as of sheet lightning, that fitfully illumined the starless sky.

Tranquilly, in the town, a church clock sounded the hours. My anxiety grew intense as the time dragged on to four in the morning. Far off, a rooster crowed. I was on the very point of leaving the buffet to seek the garage of Jean LeCrom and take a prowl around there when I saw the sidelights of his van enter the station forecourt.

Curving around, stopping just outside the buffet window, the van stood with its motor throbbing as Beckett, with his valise and briefcase, climbed out from the front seat. He walked toward the station entrance. With a grind of gears, the van began to move away—and I saw Raffles. He was in the van, had spotted me standing at the buffet window, and he beckoned me urgently, his meaning unmistakable.

Leaving our valises, I hastily unlatched the window, threw up the sash, vaulted over the sill, and raced after the van. It was gathering speed, but I caught the tailboard with both hands and with a helpful heave from Raffles joined him in the dark interior.

"Well done," he said. "Bunny, we've got a new situation on our hands. The documentary material in the package carried by Beckett has been photographed."

"Oh, dear God!"

"He's an enemy agent, Bunny. Operating from Switzerland, he controls an espionage network. On his banking journeys to and from London, he picks up intelligence material left for him at letter-drops in France. He got wind of the American aviators and set up this man LeCrom in a garage business here at Pontarlière to keep watch on their field and find out all about them."

"How d'you know this?"

"I had an ear to the partition behind the front seat of the van," Raffles said, "and I could hear them talking as LeCrom drove to his garage. He's a technician, skilled in espionage work, including photography. Beckett suspects O's man in Switzerland of being what he in fact is, an agent for the Allies, and Beckett's convinced that the seemingly innocent documentary material in the package he's carrying incorporates some kind of code or cipher. At LeCrom's garage, in a back street, they photographed the documents. It took quite a time. While they were at it, I prowled around the garage. I couldn't see in, but I knew what they were doing. When I heard the door being unbolted for them to come out, I got back into the van."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You could have called in the French police and had them arrested."

"And perhaps lost the chance of finding out where LeCrom delivers those photographs? No, Bunny. Obviously, Beckett intends to go on to London and deliver his package, seemingly intact. But it's LeCrom who has the photographs. He has them in a haversack. When we find out to whom he delivers them, presumably some codebuster sharp, then we can call in the French police—and we can take the photographs to O. They're damning evidence of Beckett's treachery, and O can confront him with them in London."

On its solid-rubber tyres the van was jolting along what, from the motion, felt like a frozen-rutted side road. Over the tailboard I could see a faint pallor stealing over the sky to the east, a wan premonition of the dawn.

With a sudden lurch, the van turned off the road, jolted heavily over uneven ground. Tree branches scraped the sides of the van. It was moving slowly now, in bottom gear. The motor roared, stopped, a handbrake-ratchet rasped, then all was still.

For a minute we crouched, listening. Faintly, a sound of distant motors was audible.

"'Planes," Raffles whispered, "the Lafayette chaps' Spads warming up, taking off."

Revolver in hand, he climbed out silently over the tailboard. He stole around the side of the van. Revolver in hand, I followed. Dark trees loomed closely around. The door to the front seat of the van stood open. The seat was vacant. LeCrom was gone. But the crack of a dead branch, trodden upon inadvertently in the woodland, betrayed the direction he had taken, and the cry of a jay bird sounded a strident alarm.

Impeded by undergrowth and ducking under frost-fuzzed tree branches, we made our way as rapidly as possible through the gloom of the woodland. The sound of motors seemed at first to recede, but then began to grow louder. It swelled to a roar overhead, and, peering up, I glimpsed against the paling sky an arrowhead formation of biplanes—the five Spads of the Lafayette dawn patrol. Heading for the deadlocked battle lines to the eastward, the 'planes passed high over the treetops and in an instant were gone, the thunder of their motors fading to a drone that died away as I pressed on after Raffles.

Quite suddenly we came out from the woodland obscurity into strengthening daylight. Fifty yards ahead, and confronting us, was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the barbwire perimeter fence of the Lafayette field.

"There he is!" said Raffles. "He's through the fence!"

At a fast, crouching run, the mechanic LeCrom was heading for the hutments and looming barnlike hangar before which two 'planes were standing, the twoseaters, the Sopwith and the Chameau trainer, the latter with its motor running.

As we flung ourselves flat on our backs, infantry style, and with our revolvers forced up the lowermost barbed strand of the fence and squirmed under it, a shot rang out. Gaining my feet, I ran on after Raffles, and saw that a man who had been standing beside the Chameau was down, shot. A second shot rang out, and I saw LeCrom, like an ape between the strutted wings, dragging the stricken pilot from the cockpit and, as he fell, taking his place in it. The motor roared and the Chameau began to move.

It jolted away across the field and, gathering speed, rose into the air as we reached the two fallen men. Other men, in pyjamas or half dressed, came running out in the lamplight that spilled from a hut.

"What the hell's going on?" one shouted, then, as he came closer: "I know you guys!"

"We're the ones who brought you the Sopwith," Raffles said, "and there goes your Chameau—stolen! Is the Sopwith fuelled?"

"I guess so."

"Then I'm going to take it," Raffles said, "and try to force the Chameau down before it can overfly the trenchlines and reach the other side with some photographs that mustn't get there. Manders here will stay and explain the situation to you." He climbed up into the cockpit. "Come on, come on! Don't stand staring! Swing that prop for me!"

The half-dressed aviator ran to the propeller, swung the blades, swung them again, and again—and the motor coughed.

"Contact!" Raffles shouted, and the aviator swung the blades again.

The motor roared, the propeller spun, the aviator ducked under the wing as the 'plane began to move—and from sheer instinct, so often in the past had I accompanied Raffles into action, I clutched at a wing-strut and, as the biplane jolted forward over the grass, I pulled myself up and scrambled into the observer's seat. The end of the field came lurching swiftly toward us, the Sopwith heaved up off the grass, and, clearing the perimeter, began to climb. Raffles glanced round for an instant, shaking a fist at me.

Only now, when it was too late to do anything about it short of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

jumping over the side to my death, did it dawn on me that in adding my weight to the Sopwith I had possibly diminished the likelihood of overtaking LeCrom in the Chameau and forcing him down on the French side of the lines.

Already, as I saw looking down over the vibrating edge of the fuselage, the small town of Pontarlière was behind us. On ribbonlike roads threading green fields below, traffic was on the move—marching troops, convoys of motor transport, horse-drawn artillery batteries, all crawling eastward to the battle lines.

Ahead, where the sky now was taking on a brassy tinge that presaged the sunrise, I could see the Chameau—not only maintaining its distance from us but, if anything, gradually increasing it. Below us, the landscape was beginning to show the scars of war—gun emplacements, ruined farmhouses, artillery parks, ammunition and supply dumps, all the signs of a build-up for bluff old General Joffre's rumoured Big Push.

Ahead and below, a spotter balloon, floating in mid-air like a tethered bubble, bloomed suddenly into flame and began slowly to sink, burning, down to the communication trenches leading up to the French-held positions. Then we were flying over them—the cratered, tree-stumped, wire-entangled devastation of no man's land between the lines—and suddenly I realised we were being fired at from below. We had overflown the enemy-held line. The Sopwith's markings, the roundels of Allied aviation on the biplane's wings, made us a target for the guns below us. But the Chameau ahead bore similar markings and was likewise a target. It flew on, as did we in the Sopwith.

I guessed that LeCrom was looking desperately for some landing place beyond the rear areas, the communication trenches, the roads where toylike transport convoys were crawling along westward to the battle lines behind us. We were getting farther and farther into enemy-held France—and, knowing Raffles as I did, I guessed that when LeCrom brought the Chameau down we would go down after him and try to get and destroy the photographs, at whatever cost to ourselves.

Suddenly, as we maintained the pursuit, gaining slightly on the Chameau, Raffles flung up an arm, pointing, and I saw, high above to our right and behind us, an arrowhead formation of five biplanes in the sky now lucid in the glow of the risen sun. The next second, the five 'planes were diving. I glimpsed black crosses on their wings as they came roaring down at us, firing as they came.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Bullets were hitting the Sopwith. Wires were severed, streaming wildly. A wing-strut snapped, the machine lurched violently, and black smoke poured back from the motor. Listing from side to side, we were going down. I had a momentary glimpse of the attackers as they overtook and downed the Chameau. Then we hit the ground with an almighty, splintering impact—and, half stunned but miraculously alive, I was being dragged from my seat by Raffles, who was shouting, "Out! *Out*!"

We fell together onto grass, and Raffles was heaving me up, forcing me into a stumbling run. From behind us came a deafening explosion and a blast of searing heat.

It was the end of the Sopwith. Broken-backed, its tail cocked up, it was burning furiously—and the crackling of the conflagration, as we backed away from it, all but drowned the sound of the five 'planes with the black crosses on their wings. The birds of prey had circled widely around and were coming back, in perfect formation, for a look at their handiwork.

Flying low, they came roaring down at us, and I expected a stream of bullets, to give us the *coup-de-grace*. I could see the leading pilot's goggles and his red-leather flying-helmet as he looked down at us, but he was not firing; he was wagging an admonitory forefinger at us, as though telling us that our plight was our own fault, for overflying the lines in a sitting duck.

"A sportsman, that chap," Raffles said, as the 'planes passed over and climbed away steeply. "Of course, he knows we'll be taken prisoners-of-war any minute. Before that happens, let's see what's become of the Chameau. If it's not in flames, we've got to get those photographs and destroy them before we're caught!"

He began to run. I followed him. It was a big field, and the next field was even bigger. Cows were grazing peacefully in it, heedless of the Chameau, which had come down on the far side. We must have run the best part of a mile, and the stitch in my side was stabbing like a knife when I reached the Chameau. Raffles, already there, was up on the wing and was hauling the limp figure of LeCrom out of the cockpit.

He had been shot in the head, and we laid his corpse on the grass.

"A traitor," Raffles said as he stripped off LeCrom's haversack and took a quick look into it, "but a brave man, all the same. And I think we'll try something before we destroy these photographs. The Chameau's undercarriage looks sound enough. Come on, lend a hand!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We hauled the Chameau back from the hedgerow it was facing. We slewed the 'plane around to face the field. Taking the haversack with him, Raffles climbed into the cockpit. I watched him anxiously as he appraised the damage there.

He called to me, "I think we've a chance! Swing the prop!"

I knew what he meant. I was learning fast. I gripped a blade of the propeller and swung it hard. The motor coughed. The propeller turned languidly—and stopped. I tried again, the motor came to life, the propeller spun, and the Chameau began to move. I ducked, running, under the nether wing, and hauled myself up into the observer's seat as the 'plane gathered speed, jolting over the grass and stampeding the cows in all directions.

The hedgerow between this field and the one where the smoke column of the burning Sopwith rose high into the blue came speeding toward us. The smoke had been seen. As the Chameau heaved up from the ground and cleared the hedgerow, men in the field-grey uniform I knew only too well were leaping out from an army vehicle and running toward the Sopwith's funeral pyre. Some of them threw themselves down as the Chameau reared low over the field, then began to gain height. I looked down over the edge of my seat. We were being fired at—our roundel markings had been seen. But the fusillade that followed us was mere rifle fire, a squandering of ammunition by scattered troops rapidly dwindling to matchstick size.

Next minute, they were gone, along with the field where the Sopwith had perished. We were on our way, climbing steadily, heading westward for the lines, and we had the photographs that LeCrom had made so desperate an effort to deliver to some military unit for transmission to code-breaking experts in Berlin. Poor devil, he deserved a better fate than to have been shot down by an aviator of the very side for which he was working. But such was the lottery of warfare—and with the enemy rear areas now coming into sight far below us I prayed devoutly that for the next minutes our own luck would hold.

Just then Raffles glanced round at me. He pointed upward and to our left—and I saw five aeroplanes with black crosses on their wings in perfect arrowhead formation. They were the same that had shot us down in the Sopwith, probably on their way back for refueling at their base. My heart sank, for it was obvious that we had been seen—they were turning our way.

Suddenly, Raffles pointed upward and to our right—and I saw, high above us, five aeroplanes with the roundels of Allied aviation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

on their wings. Probably also on their way back for refueling at their base, the five 'planes were also in perfect arrowhead formation. I guessed at once that they were the Spads of the Escadrille Lafayette.

Almost before I grasped what was happening, the air around us, high above the lines and the cratered desolation of no man's land, seemed full of birds of prey in lethal contention—diving under us, soaring above us, totally ignoring us, pursuing each other in wide swooping circles, their guns firing.

Steadily the Chameau flew on westward. The aerial combat continued behind us. I looked down from my seat. We were over the French rear areas. The toylike transport convoys still were crawling eastward toward the battle lines. Green fields appeared. I recognised the small town of Pontarlière as we passed over it. The Chameau began to lose height. Into view, below us, came the barnlike aeroplane-shed and the clustered hutments of the Lafayette field where the French flag of the American aviators flew gallantly in the sunshine.

I could see a group of aviators watching our descent. The wheels of the Chameau bumped, slowing, over the grass, and the aviators came to meet us as Raffles brought the 'plane to a standstill.

Only as my feet touched the ground and my knees almost gave way did I realize the tension I had been under. Had they entirely done so I should certainly have kissed the beautifully safe green grass.

One by one the Spads returned, some visibly the worse for aerial combat but with their pilots, including the French commandant and our blue-lagoon friends, Nordhoff and Hall, in good shape.

Grateful for my own whole skin, I was beginning to recover my normal pulse as we drank vin rouge with the American aviators in their mess hut—though we were obliged to tell them how we had happened to lose the Sopwith so magnanimously presented to them by the London newspaper magnate.

"I've no idea how he'll take the bad news," Raffles admitted.

"Tell him," Charles Nordhoff suggested, "that twoseaters are just meat for Fokkers led by the Baron."

"Baron?" said Raffles. "Was he the pilot with the red-leather helmet? A Baron, is he? Bunny, that explains why he didn't finish us off when he had us flatfooted on the ground. No gentleman, especially one with a title, would shoot a man when he's down." Raffles

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

raised his glass. "Bunny, I hope our friends here will excuse us if we drink a toast to the Baron."

Sportingly enough, though I feared that the Lafayette aviators were all too apt to encounter the Baron again, they joined us in the libation.

"He's a great airman," said Jim Hall.

"But thanks to you fellows in your Spads," Raffles said, "we've at least managed to bring your stolen Chameau back. I may truthfully add that we seldom have the experience of returning stolen property. It's a rare pleasure for us—eh, Bunny?"

"Absolutely, Raffles," I said.

To our further pleasure, we learned that the two Lafayette aviators who had been shot by LeCrom in contriving his theft of the Chameau were in hospital at Pontarlière and were expected to return soon to the squadron.

Meantime, it was urgent that we get back to O with the photographs that were damning evidence of the treachery of the bank auditor, Ralph Beckett.

In order to get to London ahead of Beckett, who had to get by train from Pontarlière to Boulogne, then board the day steamer across the Channel to Folkestone, to catch another train to London, we availed ourselves of our advantage of having aircraft available.

With the consent of the Lafayette squadron's commandant, we borrowed the Chameau. Its sundry bullet holes were hastily patched up, and two of the Spads, piloted by our friends Nordhoff and Hall, flew escort for us as far as the French coast, where, with a wave and a heartening thumbs-up gesture, they left us.

As we flew on alone across the Channel, I devoutly hoped that those two fine chaps would survive whatever dangers the war in the air might yet hold for them, and achieve when peace came—if ever—their dream of the good life among the coconut palms, by the beaches and blue lagoons of faraway Tahiti.

We landed at the field near Lympne, in Kent. Leaving the Chameau with the mechanics there, we caught a train to London. So much seemed to have happened that I could hardly believe it was not yet three o'clock in the afternoon when we walked out of Charing Cross Station. Raffles went off, taking the haversack of photographs, to report to O, and I took a taxi to my Mount Street flat.

I had not much more than had a bath, a shave, a change of clothes, and a whisky-and-soda when Raffles turned up. He seemed preoccupied, and not until we were at our Pall Mall club having a late

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lunch did I venture to ask him what O had had to say.

"He said about as much," Raffles replied with a frown, "as that wooden Indian who stands outside Sullivan's in the Burlington Arcade, where I buy my cigarettes. But he gave me this."

From his pocket Raffles took a slip of pink paper. It looked somehow familiar.

Rubberstamped with this day's date, the pink slip was a reservation for Box 4, Wyndham's Theatre, Leicester Square, at 8:30 P.M.

"I've a feeling, Bunny," Raffles said grimly, "that we'd better be there."

Searchlight beams were roving restlessly, crisscrossing high overhead, probing the sky for Zeppelins, and newsboys were bawling about a Big Push, with heavy fighting on the French front, when we walked, shortly before 8:30, into the foyer of Wyndham's Theatre.

Possibly because of the chocolates and violets I had given to her the other night, the pretty attendant with the big bow in her hair greeted us with a smile of recognition. Ushering us up the carpeted staircases, she opened the door of Box 4.

We had it to ourselves. Music was emanating from the orchestra pit as as we sat down on the gilded chairs. The audience seemed, for wartime, exceptionally brilliant. Many of the ladies were escorted by high-ranking officers of the armed forces, naval and military—and Raffles drew my attention to a man of Napoleonic appearance who was accompanying a lady into a box on the opposite side of the auditorium.

"Lord Northcliffe," Raffles murmured.

Just then, the door of our box opened. Gaunt, immaculate, his hatchet face expressionless, O walked in.

"'Evening," he said curtly. He sat down. "At six o'clock this evening," he said, "the international bank auditor, Mr. Ralph Beckett, delivered the package with which he'd been entrusted. The London commercial concern that the package was addressed to was Wyndham's Theatre. The manager here works hand-in-glove with me. I was in the manager's office when Beckett arrived. I asked him if the package was intact, just as he had received it. He assured me that it was. I then showed him the photographs of the documentary material in the package and asked him to account for them."

I swallowed with a dry throat.

"Our man in Switzerland," O said, "has had suspicions of Beckett for quite a while, and so cultivated his acquaintance—and put him

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to a test. Our man notified me by coded telegram that he was entrusting Beckett with a package and that it would be advisable to have him watched from the moment he set foot on the French side of the Lake of Geneva. I don't need to tell you what Beckett did with the package."

"Or what he did," Raffles said very quietly, "when you asked him to account for the photographs?"

"Before he could be stopped," O said, "he took a pill."

The lilt of music and hum of voices diminished. The auditorium lights were going out.

"There was no code or cypher," O said, "incorporated in the documentary material our man entrusted to Beckett. It was just a spare typescript. It's been in rehearsal here for several weeks and is about to have its first public performance. As you followed the typescript to the wrong side of the lines and back, I hope you'll enjoy the play."

O stood up, shadowy in the darkening theatre. Neither Raffles nor I moved.

"It's a drama in three acts," O murmured before he left us. "It's by the well known playwright, W. Somerset Maugham—our man in Switzerland."

The curtain rose.

IT IS HERE! A collection of twenty-one stories to guarantee you hours of entertainment.

EQ'S ANTHOLOGY

Vol. 40, Fall/Winter 1980 Edition

Please Mail to: Ellery Queen's Mystery Anthology 380 Lexington Avenue, NY, NY 10017

☐ **Enclosed is $2.25 plus 65¢ shipping/handling (total $2.90) for the Fall/Winter '80 Vol. 40 Edition of Ellery Queen's Anthology.**

Name_____

Address_____

City_____

State_____ **Zip**_____

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY NEWSLETTER

CRIME BEAT

by R. E. PORTER

MYSTERY ON STAGE: The death of playwright and anthologist Stanley Richards reminds me how neglected the study of mystery drama has been in recent decades. Richards' two excellent Dodd, Mead anthologies, *Best Mystery and Suspense Plays of the Modern Theatre* (1971) and *10 Classic Mystery and Suspense Plays of the Modern Theatre* (1973), are virtually the only current source books for any study of the mystery on stage, though the same publisher wisely issued a collection of Agatha Christie's theatrical work, *The Mousetrap and Other Plays*, two years ago.

However, there is evidence of new attention being paid to the mystery drama. Charles LaBorde recently completed an eight-part series, "Dicks on Stage," in *The Armchair Detective*. Four plays about Sherlock Holmes have been collected with some stories and parodies in *Sherlock Holmes: The Published Apocrypha*, edited by Jack Tracy for Houghton Mifflin Company. (One brief play, William Gillette's "The Painful Predicament of Sherlock Holmes," was recently performed at Bouchercon XI in Washington.) On Broadway, Ira Levin's Edgar-winning *Deathtrap* is showing signs of overtaking *Sleuth* as the longest-running mystery play of the past thirty-five years.

More evidence of the new attention being paid mystery drama is a course in "The Suspense Play" being given by Amnon Kabatchnik, professor of theater at Elmira College. Professor Kabatchnik believes his course to be the first of its kind—a survey of crime, detective and mystery plays from the Greek classic *Oedipus Rex* to modern thrillers like *Sleuth* and *Sweeney Todd*.

UNIVERSITY PRESS BOOKS: Bowling Green University Popular Press (Bowling Green, OH 43403) has long shown a special interest in the study of mystery fiction, and now it has launched a semi-annual "Journal of Detection" called *Clues*, under the editorship of Pat Browne. The handsome 134-page first issue sells for five dollars and is mainly devoted to various aspects of John D. MacDonald's work, though some of the twenty-one articles deal with Christie, Chandler, Vera Caspary and others.

Another recent book from Bowling

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Green should be of special interest to fact crime readers. *Wait Until Dark: Jazz and the Underworld, 1880–1940* by Ronald L. Morris is an in-depth study of a little-known subject—gangster sponsorship of some of the great jazz musicians of the period.

ADULT COMICS: Something unusual in the suspense field is a new hardboiled mystery told in illustrated form. *A Remembrance of Threatening Green*, created and written by Don McGregor with illustrations by Marshall Rogers, is the first recorded case of Detectives, Inc., a black-and-white private eye team. At first glance the story may resemble a comic strip, but the cover warning "for mature audiences" is well heeded. The writing and illustrations owe far more to the techniques of the motion picture than to comic books, with cross cutting and other film innovations used most effectively to tell the story of a murder with roots in a lesbian love affair. The book is published by Eclipse Enterprises (81 Delaware St., Staten Island, NY 10304) and is priced at $6.95.

LIMITED EDITIONS: Small limited editions containing one or two short stories are rare, especially in the suspense field, but two have recently appeared. Lord John Press (19073 Los Alamos St., Northridge, CA 91326) has collected two Ray Bradbury shorts with circus themes, *The Last Circus & The Electrocution*, for the first time in book form. And Waves Press (4040 MacArthur Ave., Richmond, VA 23227) has published a new Bill Pronzini story about his nameless private eye, *A Killing in Xanadu*, in limited paperback and hardback editions, with illustrations by Bill Nelson.

COMING ATTRACTIONS: The South African adventure writer Wilbur Smith has been virtually unknown in this country, despite two films made from his novels (*Gold* and *Shout at the Devil*) and his regular appearance at the top of British best-seller lists. But last year his novel *Hungry as the Sea* appeared briefly on American best-seller lists, and his new novel *Wild Justice* should bring him a big following in this country. With this book Smith moves firmly into the mystery field as his hero Peter Stride seeks the identity of a master criminal known only as Caliph, who commands a worldwide terrorist network. Doubleday will publish the American edition in February.

The first six of Donald E. Westlake's Parker novels under the pseudonym of "Richard Stark" will be reprinted in hard covers by Gregg Press this spring.

And speaking of pseudonyms, paperback readers will be especially interested in the "Lesley Andress" novel *Caper*, which Pocket Books is reprinting in January. The author is really best-selling mystery novelist Lawrence Sanders, and *Caper* is one of four recent novels he published under pseudonyms.

© 1980 by R. E. Porter.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BLOODY VISIONS

by CHRIS STEINBRUNNER

"I've got a story to tell you, and it's about spies," smirks dashing young Ricki Tarr (Hywell Bennett), looking every bit like the popular conception of the Bondian espionage agent. "If it's true, you boys are going to need a whole new organization." He is speaking to middle-aged, overweight George Smiley (Alec Guinness), who appears like everything a spy is *not*. He is telling Smiley, of British Intelligence, that the service has been infiltrated by a Soviet "mole"—a counter-agent who has burrowed into a position of trust, waiting to strike. And he could be anyone.

The six-part PBS adaptation of John Le Carré's international best-seller, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, is by turns baffling and obtuse—"Don't be put off if at first you don't understand what's going on," host Robert MacNeil warns—but is so compelling and absorbing, so rich in ominous, threatening atmosphere, it pulls you into a milieu of espionage which seems nervously real and up-to-the-moment—far more potent than the Ian Fleming fancies. Without gadgetry and without athletics, the series catches the viewer in a tightening vortex of betrayal.

Ricki Tarr has been sent to Lisbon to scout a potential Russian defector, learns the man may be a spy, and from his wife hears there is a traitor at Circus—London Intelligence headquarters. He dispatches urgent cables to London . . . and the couple disappears, apparently flown back to Moscow on an unscheduled plane. Ricki is positive the Soviets have been tipped off by the mole, and because of his information aging George Smiley has been summoned out of forced retirement by Control, the head of the British Service, to undertake the sensitive mission of ferreting out the double-spy. Control is certain it is one of five top men—and assigns them code names taken from the "tinker, tailor" nursery rhyme. Smiley must re-enter this clandestine demi-world where deception occurs daily, where no one is truly what he seems, and where loyalties shift often for the strangest reasons. He navigates a maze which skirts past his own personal failures —an unfaithful wife with whom he finds it difficult to cope and who cannot cope with him ("All life to you is a puzzle," she taunts)—and painful memories of his Soviet arch-rival, the spy Karla, now the mole's master, whom Smiley once unsuccessfully tried to bring to the British side. The one time Smiley and the sinister Karla (Patrick Stewart in a wordless role) met face to face, in a grim Delhi prison twenty years before, is a chilling flashback. Smiley enters the secret lives of his suspects, and in the final episode the mole is unmasked.

Le Carré himself makes an appearance in the series, interviewed by host MacNeil. The author (whose real name is David Cornwell) has interesting notions about how the British personality nurtures the craft of espionage: "We could never have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

run that enormous, frequently wicked Empire *without producing secret* agents." England's vocation to Empire and to the exercise of power "produced a secret class which fitted naturally into the secret world." As to the jargon of the book, "mole" *is* actually a KGB term, although Le Carré takes credit for making it fashionable. (The CIA calls the same sort of infiltrating agent a "sleeper.") The rest of the fascinating spy vocabulary is a secret language—"a Tolkien-like phraseology"—invented by Le Carré.

The author's best invention is George Smiley, "dressing badly, eating bad food, torn between humanity and duty, terribly bad at living but terribly good at his work." Alec Guinness envelopes the role masterfully, a distinguished actor who has contributed to our genre often: as Fagin in 1948, Father Brown in 1954, the leader of *The Lavender Hill Mob* (1951) and *The Lady Killers* (1956), and as a whole family of murder victims in *Kind Hearts and Coronets* (1949). He played two roles in Daphne Du Maurier's *The Scapegoat* (1959), and was in both Graham Greene's *Our Man in Havana* (1959) and *The Comedians* (1967). He also coped with British Intelligence in *The Quiller Memorandum* (1966) and played the enigmatic manservant of *Murder by Death* (1976). The character he plays, George Smiley, had already been portrayed by Rupert Davies in the screen version of Le Carré's *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* (1965), and by James Mason—very much altered, with another name—in *The Deadly Affair* (1967), adapted from the novel *Call for the Dead*.

Le Carré is not at present writing about George Smiley. The character's age and past are limitations which have put him on the back burner, but "I know from Conan Doyle and his experience with Sherlock Holmes we should *never* push him over the waterfall." Realistic dramas of espionage seem to be making their return: already this year television has presented a powerful study of true-life double-agentry, *Philby, Burgess and Maclean*, diplomats leaking atomic secrets from London and Washington (interestingly, Le Carré thought the Philby case history "without grandeur" and unusable). Soon—thanks in part to the wild popularity of the first series in England—Alec Guinness will return in an adaptation of Le Carré's newest work, *Smiley's People*. The sometimes disenchanted, deceptively brilliant spy *emeritus* will not be allowed to pad over the hill quite just yet.

© 1980 by Chris Steinbrunner.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

INTERVIEW: ROBERT TWOHY (2)

This is the conclusion of an interview that began in the previous issue.

EQMN: In reading your stories, one can almost feel your imagination soar. Do you have a definite *modus operandi* when you start to write a new piece of fiction?

TWOHY: The best way for me is to start with a sentence and see if it leads to another. If it does, I push further—maybe something will spark. If so, I get interested and keep going, and then someone comes alive and things start to happen. I follow along, eager to find out what the next scene will be.

Things get in a real tangle and I don't know how it can ever get straightened out, but that's not my worry yet, it's the worry of the actors in the turgid drama. My job is just to keep an eye on them, follow them along. In short, once the actors have some reality I let them do their thing. If I try to manipulate them or order them around, they'll turn into plastic figures. If they have any reality, they'll know what to do—if not, they're not worth a story anyway.

Later, when the adventure is over, comes my job of shaping up the story, shifting things around, sticking in support props where they're needed, wiring sections together, and hanging a decoration here and there. But that's for later. At the start, stepping back and letting things go their own way is the M.O. that for me is the most rewarding.

EQMN: Is humor something you strive for in your stories?

TWOHY: No, I don't strive for it. If I make an effort it shows and there goes the fun. I try to be receptive to humor—if it comes out of the story. If it doesn't, it probably doesn't belong there and I'd make a mistake trying to lay it in.

EQMN: Can you tell us anything about your personal life?

TWOHY: Sure. I was born in San Francisco and raised there. It was a beautiful place to be then. Or maybe I just imagine it was. Or maybe all cities were beautiful in those days.

U.S. Air Force, cryptography, corporal. San Francisco School of Fine Arts; University of California, Berkeley, B.A. in Art. Marriage, various children. Factory work, then a long time as an insurance snoop, then briefly a cab driver. Back to school, this time San Francisco State, going for an M.A. in Political Science, which I never got. Then I was a high school teacher for three years in Southern California, teaching French, which I knew slightly, and Spanish, which I didn't know at all. It was a lot of fun.

Then I got phased out, the marriage went *kaputsky*, and I went back to the Bay area and back on the cabs for ten years, finally starting to learn something. Reading, a little writing, drinking, friends, good times, dumb times. I fell down a flight of stairs, came to eventually, after several operations decided I wasn't immortal and that if I wanted to write something I'd better get to it. I've been at it since and hope to go on a while.

EQMN: In a recent story, "Putting It on the Line," your narrator says,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm Irish . . . and one of the six or ten prime Irish curses is a tendency to fiddle on the edge while life goes by—to be reluctant to risk the dream because maybe it's all that stands between the Irishman and a very bleak reality. And time passes, and the dream turns into a gob of ash and blows away." Do you think this is truer of the Irishman than of a man of any other ancestry?

TWOHY: I'm glad you asked that question. I think. Nothing an Irishman says should be taken seriously—his concern is sound, not substance. If it sounds good, he'll say it—I'm speaking of the guy in the story, of course. I think he was just trying to make profound and philosophical noises, and liked the swing of the words, and didn't particularly care if they made any sense. Which sounds as if I'm copping out on your question, which is true, but who expects a straight answer from a fiction writer of Irish descent?

EQMN: What about the Irish woman?

TWOHY: I think she's closer to reality, as women in general are, so when she has a dream she's much more likely to put it on the line. Which fits her more realistic viewpoint —what's the good of having something if you're not going to use it? Why let it just wither up and die?

THE JURY BOX

by JON L. BREEN

What happens when a very contemporary crime writer turns to a very gray-bearded thriller convention: the master criminal with the colorful sobriquet (in this case, The Avenger) who sends taunting letters to the police and press announcing his crimes? In this case, amazing things.

**** Jack S. Scott: *The Gospel Lamb*, Harper and Row, $9.95. The setting is one unknown to Edgar Wallace: an outdoor rock festival. Disgraced Superintendent Rosher, protagonist of Scott's earlier novels, has been restored to the police force, though demoted to the rank of Detective-Sergeant. The Avenger, a religious fanatic whose identity is known to the reader, goes after prostitutes, and in the rock concert context finds nearly every woman present fits the category. When a female body is found, however, there is some doubt as to whether it is the Avenger's work. Scott offers a bleak view of everybody, be it cop or pusher or Hell's Angel or religious proselytizer. The presence of one known and one unknown killer allows him to have his mystery and invert it too. Scott juggles several plot elements masterfully and offers midway one of the most surprising plot twists of recent mystery fiction. Though Scott may never satisfy fans of deduction or efficient police work, he can engineer a stunning climax with a fine touch of irony.

*** Reginald Hill: *The Spy's Wife*, Pantheon, $9.95. The first non-series Hill novel to see U. S. publication

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

offers a fresh slant on some traditional espionage doings through the eyes of an unusual viewpoint character: the wife of an agent who has abruptly disappeared, revealing a life she did not know existed. As a romance and as a spy story, it is equally unconventional and satisfying.

*** Edmund Crispin: *Fen Country*, Walker, $9.95. Of the 26 tales in this collection, seventeen concern detective Gervase Fen and all but three are short-shorts. Though not as impressive as a Crispin novel and not quite as good as the earlier collection, *Beware of the Trains*, the tales are full of nice clues, fairly laid, civilized writing, and intelligent talk. (By the way, the blurb is wrong in stating that all but two are new to the U. S. Several more than that have been reprinted in *EQMM*.)

*** William J. Coughlin: *Day of Wrath*, Delacorte, $9.95. In a hostage thriller with a difference, the picture of an overworked big city criminal court in the process of getting rid of its backlog is anything but an optimistic view of our system of justice. The various maneuverings among the judges and lawyers, alternating with the plans of a radical terrorist group to free two of its members, generate some real suspense. Not surprisingly, though, Coughlin's World Liberation Army members come across much less credibly than his lawyers and social workers. An aged cop in the courthouse information booth serves as mouthpiece for some hard words about assembly-line justice.

*** Richard A. Moore: *Death in the Past*, Raven House, $1.75. Atlanta journalist Bob Whitfield returns to his home town to bury a murdered fellow reporter and stays to finish his friend's last story. Moore's first novel is an impressive writing job. The small town atmosphere and the insider's view of investigative reporting are especially well done, and the final page is as appropriate as it is unexpected.

*** Joseph Rance and Arei Kato: *Bullet Train*, Morrow, $10.95. Here is a thriller with an irresistible plot: a bomb planted on a Japanese high-speed passenger train is set to go off if the train's speed drops below fifty miles per hour—unless a $5,000,000 ransom is paid. Not even a cast that is straight out of *Airport '81*—the pregnant woman, the prisoner and his guard, the irascible tycoon, the worried businessman—could spoil the technological and procedural fascination or the fresh Japanese background of this novel.

** Edward Stewart: *The Great Los Angeles Fire*, Simon and Schuster, $11.95. This is another book with stock characters, including an incredibly irresponsible TV commentator and a boozing L. A. fire chief of unlikely youth. (If he's only in his thirties, how can Charlton Heston play the part?) Corny as it all is, the novel is well paced and most readers will keep the pages flying. (Note: *Nobody* in Southern California uses the term "throughway" for "freeway.")

© 1980 by Jon L. Breen.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ELLERY QUEEN'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

P.O. Box 2600 • Greenwich, CT 06836

☐ Send me 7 issues of EQMM for Only $7.97!
(a savings of $1.48 off the newsstand price)

☐ Double my savings—14 issues for $15.94!

Outside U.S.A. and possessions:
7 issues $9.16 14 issues $18.33

☐ Payment of $ _____ enclosed. ☐ Bill me later.

☐ Charge to my ☐ VISA ☐ Master Charge

Card # ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Expiration Date: _____

Your Signature: _____

(Only the 14 Issues for $15.94 can be charged to your bank cards.)

Your name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Please allow 6-8 weeks for delivery of first issue.

H1ABP3

Walk the fine line between Science Fact and Science Fiction

analog SCIENCE FICTION SCIENCE FACT

Box 2670,
Greenwich, CT 06836

Please send me **ANALOG**

☐ Six issues for just $6.97
(I save $2.03 off regular rates)

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me

Save even more.

☐ Twelve issues for only $13.94
(Outside USA/poss. add $1.02 for each 6 issues.)

☐ Payment enclosed ☐ Bill me
Charge to my ☐ VISA card ☐ MASTER CHARGE

Card #
☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

Expire _____ Signature _____

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Please allow 6 to 8 weeks for delivery of first issue.

H1ABQ1

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

This is the 570th "first story" to be published by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine . . . The Weariness was growing less heavy now . . .

In the letter accompanying her manuscript, the author, Ellen Betty Brink, wrote: "For more than seventy years I have written something every day—about birds, flowers, dolls, toys, Victorian artists and writers, anything at all, just for the sheer joy of words." In a later letter Mrs. Brink continued, "In the 30's I contributed verse to 'The Saturday Evening Post,' turned out vignettes for the local newspapers, appeared in various flower publications and poetry magazines I have outlived for many years . . . My typewriter is my alter ego . . . Being in EQMM is like putting the star atop the Christmas tree!"

WHATEVER WILL BECOME OF GEORGE?

by ELLEN BETTY BRINK

It seemed to Ollie as she moved back and forth between the stove and the cabinet that the Weariness was unbearable, a shadow from which she could not detach herself. Her feet were flatirons, her hips weighted, her head was pulled back. The Weariness did not hurt; it was just There.

She hadn't noticed it at first, when in the hopefulness following George's stroke she tried to convince herself that his mind was gaining strength along with his body. Now the Weariness had taken over; it filled her thinking like a tune—"Whatever will become of George?"

She could see him sitting in the late afternoon sunlight on the back porch, staring into nothingness, his big freckled hand smooth-

© *1980 by Ellen Betty Brink.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing the ears of Old Slobbo, a hound-stray who had been with them for years. At first it was fun to call him Slobbo. George was fun then, too. He always left food on his plate after dinner and set it on the floor for a people-food treat. It was a ritual—George and Slobbo. Ollie didn't like it much, but the dishwasher did sterilize everything. Now it was Old George and Old Slobbo, and what was going to become of them? She had thought about it for a long time. Suppose she shouldn't last? George couldn't go into that immaculate home with teen-agers, clubs, and civic meetings.

The Weariness pulled her tighter. She must do it tonight. No use waiting any longer. It would not be as though George had to go alone. She'd go with him. There wouldn't be any trial or lawyers or embarrassment. Elderly couple found dead. Hardly worth a newspaper notice.

In the back of the cutlery drawer she felt for the bulgy envelope. She had been hoarding sleeping pills. George didn't need them but the doctor didn't know that. The Weariness took care of her. She shook the pellets gently and evenly into two soup bowls.

She felt suddenly giddy, and remembered a window seat where she sat as a girl reading Sara Teasdale . . . "It may be with the coming on of evening, we shall be granted unassailed repose" . . . repose . . . rest . . . weightlessness.

She sliced the bread, poured the water, brought George in from the porch, Old Slobbo lumbering at his heels. George washed his hands and she fastened a napkin deftly around his neck. Then, with almost a sigh, she ladled the fragrant soup into the bowls, whisked each gently, and sprinkled them with cheese. George liked cheese.

As she ate she chattered feverishly, hardly aware of the nothingness eyes regarding her. The Weariness was growing less heavy now, and it was only when she put down her spoon that she realized George had not touched his soup. It was on the floor where Old Slobbo's tail was thumping a staccato at the unusual bonanza of people-food. George was eating bread and butter.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DEPARTMENT OF "FIRST STORIES"

This is the 571st "first story" to be published by Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine . . . After her stroke the little old lady seemed helpless. But her daughter-in-law Annie was wrong in thinking "that since my mouth doesn't work right, my brain doesn't, either" . . .

The author, Sharon Evans, was thirty-six when she submitted her poignant and perceptive first story. She had been "writing the first two or three pages of short stories for years." With "time marching on," she decided "to get serious and start writing middles and endings, too" (what might be called the Maugham formula, to which your editor subscribes).

In college Mrs. Evans majored in art; she has been a school-library clerk, has a "gregarious ten-year-old son," and her hobbies include "reading, arts and crafts, and taking classes at the local community college" . . .

SOMETHING IS GOING TO HAPPEN

by SHARON EVANS

So now I am reduced to this one simple pleasure—if I don't count the memories. But this is just fine, sitting out here on the back porch of a summer's evening and listening to the crick, crick of my old rocker and looking out over the back yard, over the fence at the warm squares of light in the house beyond and wondering about the people who live there, who they might be. Yes, this is just fine. I like summer nights—always did—summer nights that are soft and warm like black velvet. I can tolerate the other things, if I can still have nights like this.

Kind of gets me down, you know, the way they shuffle me around

© 1980 by Sharon Evans.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

like I'm just an old bag of grain with feet. That's all I am to them, just something to be maneuvered here and then there when it's discovered I'm in someone's way. Guess I can't blame them too much, though. I know how it is to be in your prime with your children all but raised and then to suddenly find yourself stuck with somebody's old grandma. It happened to me, too, long ago, and I didn't have any more understanding of poor ol' Grandma Walsh than they do of me now.

It's my comeuppance, I guess. I feel real bad about Grandma Walsh now that it's years and years too late. Ah, well, doesn't do to dwell too much on the past—at least, not on the sad parts.

Why, there she is, the lady who lives across the fence behind us. Strange. Wonder what she's doing? Little bit of a thing, she is, but she always moves around quick and sharp like she's mad about something. But what's she doing now? Why would she want to come out her own back door and tiptoe around her own house that way? Maybe she's playing a joke on her husband. I remember when Carl and I—

What *is* she doing? Oh, there she is. Lost her for a moment in those bushes. Street lights don't shine around that side of the house. She's peeking in at the window. Must be a bedroom. Why would she want to do a thing like that? Now she's pacing off, even with the window, like she's measuring off a piece of land. Right up against the side fence now, she is, the one that runs between her house and the vacant one next door. She's leaning against it kind of like she wants to brace herself. Like—Lord, is that a gun? Lord God Almighty! She's pointing it at the window!

Wait. No, she's put her arm down. There's no gun, you silly old goose, it's just the way she was holding her hand. She's looking around now. I can just barely make her out, standing there looking around. She's looking over here. Don't know as she can see me, though, sitting way back in the dark like I am with the porch light out to keep the bugs away. No, I don't think she sees me. She's sneaking back around now. There she is in the kitchen door, black against the yellow light. She's looking around again, over here. No, she doesn't see me. She's inside now. Door's shut. I can see her shadow move across the kitchen window. There goes the light.

Whoo! What was *that* about? I don't like it. Gives me a bad feeling up and down my spine like somebody walked over my grave. Well, don't take on so. She didn't do anything bad. What a person does in her own back yard is her own business no matter how strange.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Still . . . No, don't dwell on it. Carl used to say that. Said I had too much imagination.

Crick, crick. Crick, crick. Lord, I do love this old rocker. Worn down smooth like satin after all these years. Fits me just right. Every time I hear this crick, crick sound I think of all the babies I rocked. If I'd known I was going to outlive most of them—damn! That awful porch light!

"Time to come in, Gramma."

Ah, so here's my darling daughter-in-law, brisk brusque Annie. Hoped she'd forget me a bit longer.

"Come on, Gramma, bedtime. I've had a long hard day and I've got to get you tucked in yet."

"Oo's da nawber oer dere? Oer back fess. Wha's name?"

"That's nice, Gramma. Up we go."

Sometimes I get so mad at Annie I could spit. She jabs one cold bony hand under my armpit and with the other she grabs my elbow and hoists me up. Some day she's just going to sling me over her bony shoulder like a bag of potatoes. Never listens to me, either. I know I'm hard to understand since my stroke but maybe she could try a little harder. She thinks that since my mouth doesn't work right, my brain doesn't, either. Treats me like a child, a simple-minded one at that.

"All right, Gramma, you hang onto the jamb while I let go to open the door. Tha-a-at's a good girl. Take it easy. There's a step up here. Tha-a-at's right." I know, I know. We do this every night.

Annie's trying very hard to be patient. I can tell. She's paced herself to my slow shuffle but I can sense the tension in her. I know it only too well. If only I could tell her how well I understand, tell her of all the times I felt like giving Grandma Walsh a good shove.

I'm trying to hurry but it's so hard. This right leg of mine just won't cooperate. If only there hadn't been the stroke. I am not accustomed to being feeble. I always believed that if I got plenty of exercise I would enjoy a spry old age. I worked so hard at it and then I had the stroke. It isn't fair.

I used to run when I was young, just for the joy of running, to feel the wind in my hair, to feel it bounce rich and heavy against my back. And Carl and I, we used to take those long walks, especially in the fall when the leaves were crisp under our feet, and we never thought anything about just being able to take a walk.

"Here we are, Gramma. Here's your nice cozy little room. You just sit on the edge of the bed and I'll help you get your things off.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We'll have you in bed all nice and toasty in just the shake of a lamb's tail."

It's July. I'm already toasty.

"Do eh mahsel'." I can, too. I know I can do it myself if she'll just give me time. I don't like being undressed like a baby.

"Do it yourself? I'm sure you could, Gramma, but I really want to get to bed and I'd worry about you falling if I went off and left you. We mustn't have that! So let's just get you tucked in. Maybe when there's more time . . ." Annie always lets her sentences trail off when she doesn't mean what she's saying. Time. Ha!

She always looks so grim when she's working over me. She looks the same when she's stuffing a cold, dead white turkey and knows she has to get it in the oven real quick or it won't get done in time. She pushes and pulls my arms out of and into sleeves like they were stubborn drumsticks.

"We've really got to get this hair cut. Long hair is ridiculous on a woman your age. Such a nuisance taking these braids down."

"No!"

"All right, all right, don't get excited. I know. Tom says you've always worn your hair this way. For Dad. It's such a nuisance, though."

"Leeb eht."

"Leave it? Won't that be uncomfortable?" She looks at me doubtfully when I shake my head. "Well . . ." Annie does what she does to keep from feeling guilty, I think. She doesn't want to go off to bed feeling guilty.

"Fine. Do ahmorrow."

"Well, all right, if you're really sure. Let's get your feet in now. Tha-a-at's a good girl. Are we snuggled in? Go-o-od. Good night, Gramma, pleasant dreams."

"Ere's Dhommy?"

"Tom? Oh, Gramma, he was so bushed he went to bed right after dinner. He's been working such long hours lately. He'll see you in the morning."

If I wake up in the morning.

Darn, she's turned out the light. Annie never forgets anything. I'm not tired. I dozed a little there in the rocker and now I'm not sleepy. Well, I'll wait until she's had time to get to bed and then I'll sit up and take my braids down.

Cut my hair. I could spit! Carl loved my hair. It used to be such

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a nice shade of brown and so thick. He loved the way I wore it coiled in braids on top of my head. And he loved watching me take it down at night and brush it until it gleamed. He was the only one who ever saw it flow free down my back after I was a grown woman—until the hospital and now Annie. Who'd have thought I'd live so long without Carl? They're all gone now—Carl, little Carl, my sweet Mary who died so young and, three years ago, my funny little Johnny.

Tommy's the only one left now. Tommy, my change-of-life child. Carl always called him our little afterthought. Tommy was the one I didn't want when I first found out about him. It was the thought of starting all over with the diapers and the colic.

Funny how things turn out. Tommy and I were closer than the others when he was little. Maybe it was because I felt guilty about not having wanted him at first. Maybe I'd mellowed a bit by the time he was born. The other children were all but raised by then and things were easier. I had more time to spend with him. Whatever the reason, we were close and it pains me now, the way he never quite looks me in the eye any more, like he can't tolerate what I've become. I'm still the same inside, Tommy! Well, he does the best he can. If not for him—and Annie, too—I'd be in a nursing home and I'd never see my grandchildren.

I've got ten grandchildren; some great-grandchildren, too. Tommy's children are the only ones I ever see except on my birthday when they all rush in for an hour or two and then rush out again.

My Tommy's three children are teenagers now, busy with their own budding lives, maneuvering around me like I'm an old piece of furniture with too much sentimental value to throw out but not really enjoyed, either. That's okay. I understand. At least I can see in them little pieces of Carl and me. It helps to know that parts of me are still very much alive and when I think that if it hadn't been for me none of them would be here, I feel real good.

Well, it should be safe to sit up and take my braids down now. Annie's probably asleep. I won't turn on the light, though. If she should happen to get up and see the light under my door, she'd be here quick as a wink shaking her head over me. I can reach the window shade from here. I'll just sit up and take my hair down by the light of the moon.

Every day of my life since Carl gave it to me on our first anniversary, this little hairpin box has given me joy whenever I look at it. Those aren't real jewels in the lid and the velvet inside hardly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

looks red any more, but Carl gave it to me because he loved me and thought I was beautiful. Every time I put my pins in it I feel, even now, just for an instant, beautiful.

Feels good to have my hair down. Perhaps it's a good thing that Carl didn't live long enough to see it turn coarse and gray and then, with the stroke, thin and white. It would have hurt him so.

I'm still not sleepy. That's the way it is when you get old. I seem to slip off into dozens of little catnaps during the day and then it takes me such a long time to get to sleep at night. When I was young I'd sleep almost the instant my head touched the pillow. I worked so hard then. I wish I could sleep like that now. Maybe, somewhere deep in the back of my mind, I'm afraid I won't wake up again, although I do think I'd like to go that way—when the time comes—quietly, peacefully, in my sleep, not knowing. Guess I'll just plump up these pillows and lean back and enjoy the moon for a while and remember all the moons that Carl and I watched together.

Say, now, there's that woman from across the back fence again. My, my. What's she up to now? Wait a minute . . . There's someone else out there, too. A man. Couldn't see him at first, being more in the shadows. Not too easy to see either one of them, skulking around the way they are.

The stroke didn't take everything away from me. I still have these sharp old eyes and I can see that little woman standing there close to that man in the back yard, talking and talking, and I know that man isn't her husband. I've seen him a time or two when he comes out back of a Thursday evening to carry the garbage can around to the front sidewalk for the pickup the next morning. Her husband is built like a bear and has a beer belly. This man is tall and beanpole lean.

His silhouette is standing over hers, head bent like he's listening real hard. He's making impatient gestures with his hands. Now she is. Looks like they're going to have a fight. No, they're calming down now. She's putting her hands on his shoulders, stretching up, kissing him. Oh, he grabbed her! No, just a quick hug. He let go. There she goes, scampering over to the back door. She's wearing a white dress, like maybe she's a waitress. She shuts the door. There's no light in the kitchen this time.

Lordy, this is looking worse and worse. The man isn't leaving. He's looking around just like she did. He's looking back here. I could almost swear he sees me but of course he can't, thank the good Lord.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He's going over the fence now. Hey, he's hunkered down on the other side. He's not going to leave at all. He's waiting for something.

Those two are up to no good! You don't act sneaky like that unless you've got something bad up your sleeve. I'm going to sit right here and watch. Something's going to happen.

"Mom?"

Sunlight is making a bright patch on my quilt. The shade is still up. The house on the other side of the fence looks normal, peaceful. That's Tommy calling me. He's standing here by my bed but he's not quite looking at me. I don't think he's looked at me for years.

"Dhommy."

He smiles stiff-like at the lace edge on my pillowcase. "How ya doin' this morning, Mom?"

"Fine. Jus' fine."

"I've got to leave early this morning so I won't be having breakfast with you. Just thought I'd look in and say goodbye." He's looking out the window.

"Fine, fine." Don't be a polite stranger, Tommy. You can talk to me. Maybe I can't answer so good but I can listen.

"Well, see you later, Mom. Have a good day."

Annie has been waiting outside the door. Probably it was she who insisted that Tommy come in to see me. "Good morning, Gramma. Oh, you took your hair down. Good *girl!* See? You're getting better."

Never doubted it for a moment, my dear.

"Well now, are we ready to get up? Go-o-od. We'll skip your sponge this morning because the nurse will be here around ten to give you your tub bath. Won't that be nice? Now, upsy-daisy."

I can get my own legs over the edge of the bed, thank you.

"Off with your nightie and on with your pretty paisley print."

I'd rather wear the pink one today. You are not stuffing a turkey, Annie.

"There. Don't you look nice. Blue and green are *your* colors, Gramma. Now let's sit down over here and I'll braid your hair for you."

You never do it right, Annie.

"I know how you feel about your hair, Gramma, but I wish you *would* give some serious thought to getting it cut. I have a good friend who's a beautician and I know I can get her to come over and cut it and give you a nice permanent. Just think how sweet you'll look with a cloud of white curly hair. Oh, I'm sorry, Gramma. I know

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that hurt but you mustn't shake your head like that when I'm trying to braid."

Over my dead body will you cut my hair. Never had a permanent in all my life. Horrible smelly things.

"You'd be doing me a huge favor, too, you know. I really don't have the time to fool with this every day. Well, just think about it. Please? You'd look so much better."

The way I wear my hair is the only thing I have left.

"Well, think about it."

Shut up, Annie.

Here she comes with that lukewarm washcloth again. I can wash my own face, you know. How I hate this! I hope you live to be 112, Annie. The bony hand in the armpit again. Yank, yank. This is how you pay. I knew I'd pay some day.

"Let's go have a nice hot breakfast."

Sweet-faced Betsy, so much like my own Mary who never lived to be sixteen, is at the stove frying bacon. The two boys are at the table. Jimmy's finishing up his homework while he eats his grapefruit and Don is buried behind a magazine with a motorcycle on the cover.

"Here's Gramma. Say good morning to Gramma."

Annie's a good mother. I'll say that for her. Always insists that her children have a good hot breakfast before they leave for school. We have that in common. I always insisted too.

She sees to it that the children acknowledge my presence. They mumble their good mornings and are careful not to look at me while I'm eating. They're good children, as teenagers go, and I'm sure they don't want to embarrass me. It *is* embarrassing, not always being sure I can control the fork on its way to my mouth. I do better when I eat very slow and concentrate very hard.

The doorbell. That will be my babysitter, of all things. I don't really need Mrs. Scott. I'm sure I could sit here all day by myself. I wouldn't mind at all. Can't talk to anyone, anyway, and I have my memories to keep me company. I'm sure I could even get up and shuffle myself to the bathroom if I needed to, if there was no one around to rush me.

It's not that I mind having Mrs. Scott here. She doesn't care a lick about me, just comes for the money, so she's not trying to beat off feelings of guilt because she's not wishing I wasn't here. She just parks her round self on the couch in the family room and watches soap operas. At noon she fixes lunch for the both of us and washes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the dishes and asks me if I want to go to the bathroom every now and then and, on Mondays and Thursdays, helps the visiting nurse give me a tub bath. She's not so bad. She even talks sometimes, though it's more to herself than to me.

The children, making a great clatter, are hustling off with their books and now there goes Annie, dashing around to do a few last-minute things. She calls goodbye from some distant corner of the house and I hear a door slam.

Mrs. Scott is clearing the table. "Oh, you ain't finished, are you, Mrs. Walsh. You just go right ahead and take your time. I'll start the dishes and pretty soon we'll watch some television, hmm?"

Mrs. Scott is now holding her hand under the tap, waiting for the water to get hot, looking out the kitchen window. "Well, I'll be. Wonder what's going on over there?"

"Wha's dah?"

"Oh." She's looking at me like she wonders if she should tell me or not. She shrugs a little. "There's cop cars all over the place next street over. Looks like they're at the house right behind."

"Eh?" Lordy, almost forgot about last night!

"Yeah. An ambulance, too. Looks like somebody had an accident. Now, now, Mrs. Walsh, don't get all excited. It's got nothing to do with us. I wonder, though . . .

"Will you be all right by yourself for a few minutes? Maybe I'll just mosey out to the fence and see if I can find out what's going on. Good. Now don't you move till I get back."

So they *were* up to something last night, those sneaky shadows. I've got a pretty good idea what they were up to, too. I'll just bet I know what happened. Can't say that I blame that little bit of an angry-looking woman. I'd be angry too if I was married to that sour-looking lout of a man. Of course I was spoiled. I had Carl for twenty-seven years.

Can't stand this waiting. Got to find out what's going on. If I stand up real slow and hang onto the table, I'll bet I can edge around to where I can see and still get back before Mrs. Scott comes in. There. I'll hang on with my left hand; it's stronger. Here we go . . . just a little more . . . There!

Mrs. Scott's leaning on the fence. There's a policeman kneeling on the ground, doing something under the window. That very same window! Here comes another one. He's coming over to talk to Mrs. Scott. Now I'll find out. I wonder where that little bit of a woman is. Maybe she's already in jail, or maybe she can pull the wool over

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

their eyes. It does happen sometimes. Sometimes people *do* get away with murder.

The policeman is climbing the fence. Lordy, they're coming in here! I'd better get back or Mrs. Scott'll never dare leave me alone again.

Careful now . . . careful. Concentrate. Hang onto the table. If you fall, old girl, you'll really be in trouble. Ha! I did it! I knew I could. I'm all out of breath, though. Better calm down.

"Here she is, officer, but like I told you, she's just a little old lady who's had a stroke. There ain't nothing she can tell you."

The young policeman is looking at me. He's writing me off. Of course. I can't tell him anything. I'm not a person. I'm just a withered old body sitting around and waiting to die. So okay. If that's the way you want it.

"If you want to see the rest of the family, you'll have to come back around six, but I think that if they'd heard shots or noticed anything, they'd of mentioned it. Myself, I just come in by day to sit with old Mrs. Walsh, here. Only been here half an hour."

Wait. If I do tell them what I saw, it might get in the papers and, even more important, Tommy will know. Then he'll see that my mind didn't curl up and die along with the right side of my body.

"Sha shomsing lach ni'."

"What's that?"

"Oh, dear, I'm afraid we're getting her all excited. It's probably your uniform. She's just holding on by a thread now, so if you don't mind—"

"Oh. Oh, sure. Someone will contact the family later."

Damn them! I am not a radish! All right, young man. I could have helped you. I could have gotten you some pats on the back, maybe even a promotion, but there you go hightailing it out of here like your pants are on fire. Lordy. Sometimes I think young folks are afraid of people like me. They don't think we're really alive but they don't want to be the cause of us finally kicking the bucket, either.

"Well, well, well." Mrs. Scott is leaning one sausage arm on the sink, shaking her head at the window. "Who'd of thought something like that would happen in *this* neighborhood?"

"Wha' habbon?" I think I know, I'm sure I know, but tell me anyway. *Talk* to me.

"Don't you get excited, Mrs. Walsh. You know that ain't good for you."

"Wha' habbon!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Well, seems like the man who lives in the house behind you got himself shot."

"Dead?"

"As a doornail. Seems his wife—she's a nurse—left him reading in bed when she went to work last night. When she gets home this morning, there he is, right where she left him, only he's stone-cold dead. Poor thing. Imagine coming home after a long night of taking care of sick people to find yourself a widow."

My, my. Looks like she's going to get away with it. Must be a good little actress. Bet nobody else saw what I saw. Who but a crippled old woman has time to sit on a back porch of a summer's evening? Who but an old woman suffers from insomnia and sits in the dark late at night, afraid she'll rouse her fussy daughter-in-law if she turns on the light? Probably nobody.

People are too busy these days to pay any attention to what their neighbors are doing. Why, Tom and Annie probably don't even know the name of the people who live behind them, probably have never spoken to them. That's not the way it used to be. People used to be more neighborly and, yes, more nosey. In the old days that woman could never have gotten away with what she's done, wouldn't even have considered it. People don't get together in their back yards of a summer's evening any more. They stay inside with their air conditioners and their television sets.

Some people get away with murder and it looks like that woman is going to be one of them, if they don't catch her boy friend, if they didn't leave some clue behind. It's such a stupid, simple little scheme that they'll probably get away with it.

I know I did. I just put the pillow down over Grandma Walsh's face and held it there for a while. She was so old and weak she hardly struggled at all. I told myself she was glad to go. I told myself I was doing her a favor. I was so very tired of taking care of her day and night. It's just too bad that when I took the pillow away and turned around I saw my baby, my precious little twelve-year-old Tommy standing there, watching. We weren't so close after that.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

JOYCE HARRINGTON

Joyce Harrington in a purely comic mood . . . the lilting lighthearted tale of gorgeous Bootsie, the young Texas wildcat, of the aging playboy narrator, of the big old hound dog named Bruce, and of Tex-Mex Josefa of the hilarious dialect—and of their lifestyles in the Big Apple . . .

DISPATCHING BOOTSIE

by JOYCE HARRINGTON

It was easy to *think* about killing Bootsie. But doing it, in real life, was a little more difficult. Let me tell you about Bootsie. She was Texas born and bred. Li'l ol' cow patty of a town in West Texas, as she liked to say. Her daddy was a wildcatter, and until she was seven years old, again according to her, they lived on pinto beans and the gusher that was going to come in tomorrow or the next day. All she would ever say about her mother was that she turned sorrowful and died before she had any fun out of life.

Well, gushers sometimes do come in, and Bootsie's daddy hit a whopper. What she remembered about that was first of all eating the first steak of her life and afterward getting sick, and second of all being sent off to boarding school. She learned a lot there. Not really how to read, although she could manage movie magazines if she tried real hard and there happened to be a picture of Burt Reynolds on the page; nothing whatever about math. As she liked to say, "I got so much money, I don't need to count it." No. What Bootsie learned at school was how to dress and what to do with her hair and how to spend all that money.

She also learned to smoke, both plain and funny cigarettes, drink whiskey, and generally behave like a Texas wild woman. Anything

© *1980 by Joyce Harrington.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

she wanted, she only had to ask Daddy.

I met Bootsie about a year after her Daddy had died. Killed in the crash of his private jet on the way to Acapulco. Five of the flower of Texas womanhood went with him. Daddy was evidently making up for all those years of pinto beans and sorrow. Bootsie, as she liked to tell it, cried a whole lot. But after the visit of the lawyers, she perked up. School, by that time, was boring and there was nothing else for her to learn. What she needed, she decided, was a change of scene.

She flipped a coin between New York and Los Angeles—she had learned enough geography to know that one was on the East Coast and the other on the West and both were large and expensive—and it came up in an easterly direction. She rented a suite in the Barclay and moved in with a little Tex-Mex woman named Josefa who washed and ironed her underwear, and a big old hound dog named Bruce. So Bootsie and Bruce and Josefa were set to see New York.

Josefa didn't speak a word of English, but she was quick and intelligent and got along with Bootsie by anticipating her every need. The few times she didn't, Bootsie would yell and scream and throw things at her until she got the drift. Example. "Dammit, Joe! Didn't I tell you yesterday to get rid of those flowers? The damn things remind me of funerals. Out! Out! Out!" And the vase would go sailing across the room, barely missing Josefa where she stood pretending to cower but with her dark eyes flashing malice. "Sí, sí, querida. Hija de puta. Las flores. Pronto. ¡Que tu murieras mil veces con tanto dolor! Gracias a Dios." That's the way it was between them. Screeching abuse on one side, and muttered maledictions of a thousand painful deaths on the other. Bruce terrorized the bellhops and all the other East Side dogs he met on his walks with Josefa. He adored Bootsie, and even when she kicked him was content to roll over at her feet and grovel abjectly.

I haven't told you what Bootsie looked like. She once showed me a snapshot of herself taken in pre-gusher days back in the cow-patty town. It was straight out of *The Grapes of Wrath*, not that she'd ever read the book or seen the movie, or even heard of the Dust Bowl. She stood, knobby-kneed, staring into the camera in a dress that was a couple of sizes too small and obviously had not been in the vicinity of soap and water for most of its career. Her feet were bare and her toes curled in the dust of the yard of a small shack that was out of focus in the background. Her hair hung lank about her face, chopped off in a homemade Dutch bob. But it was her eyes that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dominated the picture. It was a black-and-white print, so you couldn't tell that the eyes were the color of Delft tiles, bright and pitiless blue. What stared at you out of the picture was a hunger so vast it seemed capable of devouring the earth for an appetizer and going on from there. That was then.

When I met her she was nothing short of gorgeous. The hair was a sleek shimmer of white-blonde silk falling straight to her shoulders, and the eyes had learned to sparkle and invite. She was tall, almost as tall as I am, and could have been bony and awkward. But the school had taught her to move gracefully, and nature had endowed her with just enough flesh in all the right places to make her entrances into Regine's the highlight of any evening. If you looked closely at her face, you might have seen the emptiness there, the total void, the hunger that still hadn't been assuaged. But few people ever got past the eyes, the cheekbones, the pale flawless skin, the wide mouth that laughed and chattered and told the grossest kind of jokes with an air of perverse innocence lent her by her West Texas drawl. And, of course, she absolutely reeked of money.

Did I think of playing Pygmalion to her Galatea? There might have been something of that in my attraction to her. I did take her to museums where she sniggered at Matisse and laughed out loud in front of Picasso's Guernica. "I never saw no horse that looked like that," she said. At concerts she fell asleep, and plays bored her into fidgets and twitches unless they were simple-minded musicals that she could leave with a song or two tinkling around inside her skull. What, then, did she like about New York? Because like it she did. "I purely love this town," she often said.

Well, for one thing, she could, and did, spend more money faster on everything from worthless junk to priceless antiques than she could do in the whole of Texas including Neiman-Marcus. She made a weekly pilgrimage to Cartier's the way ordinary mortals go to the A & P. Gucci's, Saks, Bergdorf's, and a host of snobby little boutiques in between grew to know and love her. She went slumming in Bloomingdale's. When I cautioned her about overspending and tried to lecture her on the wisdom of making sound investments, she quickly put me in my place.

"Don't you fret your li'l ol' head about that, honey. My lawyers take care of all that boring stuff."

And they did. Two of them flew up regularly from Texas, stiff men with bulging briefcases who out-Brooks-Brothered anything seen on Madison Avenue. They didn't like me, and I'm sure that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

behind closed doors they advised Bootsie to turf me out. By that time I was more or less permanently installed in the hotel suite, although I still kept my tiny one-room walkup in case this one went the way of my not-so-sound investments and the rather large sum of money left me by my dear deceased maternal relative.

And what, you might well ask, did fun-loving Bootsie see in me? I often asked myself whether, in her eyes, I fell into the category of worthless junk or priceless antique. I admit that she was the answer to an aging playboy's prayer. I bear a distinguished name, but the wealth that had made that name a household word had long since vanished. I am handsome, a claim I make with all due modesty, in a civilized kind of way quite different from the rawboned cowboys she must have known back home. No great thinker, but I did offer her a smattering of culture which awed her even as she resisted and mocked. Or was it simply that out of all the men who pursued her, I was the only one who was old enough to be her father?

Whatever the attraction, it was there and real enough for her one day to say to me, while we were sitting around the hotel suite trying to decide what to do for the evening, "Hey, why don't we get married?" Bootsie was like that. Spur of the moment, and if it seemed like a good idea, we did it. It seemed like a good idea to me.

"Why, indeed, not?" said I, with visions of sugar plums liberally coated with dollar signs dancing in my head.

The wedding took place just as soon as Bootsie had time to go shopping for a whole new wardrobe, and we gave a party that became as legendary as Truman Capote's Black and White Ball. Just three hundred of our closest friends. When the dust settled and we were about to gather up our luggage and Bruce and Josefa for an extended European honeymoon tour, I got the biggest shock of my life. I was looking forward to doing Europe in style. It had been a long time since I had stayed at the Ritz or basked on a Riviera beach. I had promised Bootsie all the great museums and cathedrals; I could almost taste the fabulous food and wine.

She mooched into the hotel suite, scowled at her matched set of Louis Vuitton luggage, kicked the nearest piece, and said, "Get on the phone, honey, and cancel the trip."

"But the reservations are all made," I protested. "The whole tour is planned."

"Who wants to go to boring old Europe?" she said. She pronounced it "Yerp."

She called Josefa out of the tiny room where she spent hours

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

watching soap operas in Spanish and told her to start unpacking.

"What's wrong?" I asked. "If you're tired we can postpone the trip a few days."

"I ain't tired." She pronounced it "tard." The West Texas drawl was beginning to grate on my nerves. I was prepared to overlook certain things in exchange for certain other things, and she was reneging on her side of the bargain. She frowned as if puzzling over a vexing problem in higher math. "It just seems to me that we'd be spending an awful lot of my money to go round seein' a bunch of places that I don't want to see in the first place."

I can't tell you how ominous that sounded to me. And it was merely a foretaste of things to come. I got on the phone and called the travel agent.

The next day the lawyers appeared. I had thought that now, as Bootsie's husband, I would be privileged to sit in on their deliberations, but such was not the case. They invited me to take myself off while they conducted Bootsie's business. Their briefcases seemed exceedingly well stuffed this time. Bootsie merely shrugged and turned her blue eyes helplessly upward. Bootsie was about as helpless as a Sherman tank. I went to the movies.

When I got back, the lawyers had departed and Bootsie was looking thoughtful. That in itself should have warned me, but I was determined to be my usual carefree self.

"Well, my dear," I said, "where shall we dine tonight? Le Veau D'Or? Lutece? Or perhaps a simple meal from room service?"

"I sent Joe out for some Big Macs." She gazed at me, all bright blue enthusiasm. "You were so right, honey. I've been spending way too much. From here on in we're going to economize."

I managed to swallow that one without gagging, but felt entitled to a question or two. "We're . . . you're not broke, are you, my dear?"

She laughed. "Shoot, no! There's still plenty in the old kitty. But I'm a married lady now, and I got to think about the future. I want there to be something left over at the end of the trail."

A horrid suspicion crossed my mind. I was not temperamentally suited to fatherhood nor, although we had never discussed it, did I think that Bootsie was attuned to the patter of tiny feet. But the possibility existed and would account for her strange behavior. There was nothing to do but ask.

"Bootsie, are you, by any chance, pregnant?"

Again she laughed. "Naw. When I get ready to breed, I'll let you know right off. But I do have a little surprise for you. Them lawyers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

are pretty smart fellows, and they know people all over the place. They been worrying about you, and now that we're married, they feel like they have to look out for you, too. They found a job for you. Ain't that nice?"

"A job?" I repeated stupidly. "But, Bootsie, dearest, I've never worked at a job. I wouldn't have the foggiest idea what to do."

She came to me then, cuddling into my arms like a little girl and fixing me with her bright blue innocent stare. "That's all right. You'll figger it out. And you'll be making enough money so's I won't have to give you an allowance any more. Think what a saving that'll be. But you won't have to start until we move."

"Move!"

"Oh, yes. Do you realize what this hotel is costing me? I'm going to start looking for an apartment tomorrow. They say that rents are very cheap in Queens."

"Queens!" I was reduced to monosyllables. Marriage had turned my spendthrift Bootsie into a miser. Queens, indeed! I wondered if those smart lawyers could arrange an instant annulment of the marriage, but her next words started me thinking in another direction.

"There's one more thing. They didn't want me to tell you this but you're in it, so I told them you had a right to know. I made my will. It felt real creepy to think about dying, but they said I ought to do it. So I did."

I stroked her silky head and told her not to talk about it if it disturbed her. I told her that the lawyers were absolutely right in advising her to make the will, but that now she should just forget all about it and we'd live a long and happy life together. Tears of happiness rose in her blue eyes, and she kissed me while I pondered how and how soon I could arrange to benefit from her arrangements.

Josefa came in carrying a large white sack reeking of onions and greasy meat. Bruce bounded at her heels, as excited by the smell as I was repelled by it. I excused myself from the feast on the grounds of a slight headache and went to lie down with my thoughts. As I closed the bedroom door, I heard Bootsie say, "I purely love Big Mac's, don't you, Joe?"

I managed to dissuade Bootsie from her plan of settling in Queens by appealing to her newfound parsimony. Every place we looked at involved a double fare, both bus and subway, for me to get to work. Oh, yes. I had decided to go along with the destiny her lawyers had mapped out for me. For the time being. We found a gloomy apart-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ment on the Upper West Side, in what the corner newsstand proprietor assured me was a high-crime district. Josefa was delighted. At the hotel she could only communicate with the occasional Puerto Rican bellhop. Here, she chattered for hours with neighbors and shopkeepers, and even invited some of her new friends in for coffee. I didn't object, although I might have, on the grounds that some of them might have relatives adept in the arcane art of breaking and entering.

Bootsie loved the role she was playing. Happy little housewife with a husband who went off every morning on the subway and returned every evening to a meal that she had prepared with her own hands. Her cooking was dreadful, but I pretended to enjoy it. I encouraged her to take Bruce for long walks in Central Park, both day and night. I told her she'd never be a true New Yorker until she learned to ignore traffic lights and dodge her way across streets in defiance of the speeding taxis and lumbering buses.

I pooh-poohed her concern that the building had no doorman and the elevator was a self-service one. And I told her that the roof was the ideal place for sunbathing. But while all around her, people were being mugged, knifed, shot, strangled in lonely elevators, run over by berserk drivers, pushed off roofs, and otherwise disposed of, Bootsie remained unscathed. I realized that if I expected to benefit from Bootsie's will, I would have to take a more active role. It was not enough to place her in jeopardy and then wait for the action to start.

In the meantime Bootsie's greatest happiness was the receipt of her monthly statement of account. She loved to watch her nest egg grow. She had sold off all her jewelry, returned as many of her expensive clothes as she could and peddled the rest to friends, got rid of the priceless antiques and the worthless junk at a handsome profit, and handed every cent over to the lawyers to reinvest. We lived off her income, but only a small portion of it, and she was constantly looking for new ways to cut corners.

She stopped going to the hairdresser and her dark roots began to show. Her face and body grew pudgy from the starchy meals she prepared. Pinto beans appeared three or four times a week. And the hunger in her blue, blue eyes grew ever more intense and frightening. If I'd had any sense at all, I would have left her then. But there was always the will, the will and the growing nest egg that was achieving the dimensions of something deposited by a dinosaur.

The job that Bootsie's lawyers had found for me was with a bro-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kerage firm in Wall Street. Although I had frittered away some youthful years at Harvard achieving a gentleman's C and so could be considered one of the tribe, I was nothing more in the eyes of the firm than a glorified messenger boy. This suited me fine. While all around me serious younger men pondered portfolios and munched Mylanta tablets, I carried my Mark Cross attaché case (a gift from Bootsie before true parsimony set in) around the city and was reasonably happy in my work. My taxi fares went on the expense account and I had lots of free time.

Free time in which to brood. There had to be some way of dispatching Bootsie and coming into my inheritance. I could poison the pinto beans, but poison, I believed, was easily traced and I would surely be viewed as the most likely Borgia. It had to look like an accident or like one of the many wanton senseless murders that occurred with alarming regularity in our beloved town.

I thought about hiring a dispatcher—one of the small army of gun-toting desperados that the newspapers claimed infested our streets—but how to find one whom I could trust, one who would trust me and do the job on credit until Bootsie's will gave me the resources to pay for her demise? I even considered recruiting Josefa, whose maledictions those days had reached new heights and were conducted in a rapid screeching Spanglish, Josefa having taken the trouble of learning a few pungent items of New York street talk. The burden of Josefa's harangues seemed to be that Bootsie was stingy (agreed), that Bootsie was fat and lazy (becoming more true every day), and that she, Josefa, was homesick and wanted to return to West Texas if only Bootsie would give her the airfare.

Bootsie wouldn't. The terms of Josefa's employment, as far as I could gather, resembled indentured servitude. She received no salary. When times were good and Bootsie was spending freely, Josefa enjoyed the high life and only fulminated to keep in practise. But now that Bootsie was scrimping on everything, even Bruce's dog food, Josefa's curses achieved a kind of desperate poignancy. She might make a good ally.

As a kind of insurance I began smuggling in tidbits for Bruce. Bootsie had cut him off from meat entirely, doling out small portions of a substance that looked like wood chips and smelled like burnt rubber. Bruce grew thin and despondent, and developed a bad case of dandruff. The first time I brought him a snack, half a Sabrett's hot dog with onion sauce, he rewarded me with a limp thump of his tail and a grateful, if weak, bark. After that, I always had something

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in my attaché case for him when I got home from work, and soon he was my devoted friend. I doubted if I could convince him to rend Bootsie limb from limb, but at least he might not interfere if I had to do a little rending myself.

But still, the appropriate means eluded me and the frugal days stretched into penurious months. I thought often of Bootsie's beautiful money gathering mold and interest when it could be the comfort and solace of my declining years. Something would have to be done. When, on an October evening, I came home to find that she had replaced all the light bulbs with low-wattage numbers which she had no doubt stolen from the subway station, I knew the time had come.

Bruce bounded at me out of the gloom of the shabby flat and I slipped him a chunk of liverwurst that I'd bought at a deli on my way home. Josefa was in the kitchen, stirring the eternal pinto beans and singing dolefully of *amor desleal.*

"Where's Bootsie?" I asked her.

"Gong hout," she told me, adding, "I hope she fall en el río and drowng."

Stifling an urge to shout "Me, too," I reprimanded Josefa for her disloyal sentiments and opened the kitchen window to let out the thick aroma of the beans. The thick aroma of the garbage tossed into the airshaft by our neighbors came in, but I left the window open anyway. By craning outward and upward I could see the purple sky over Manhattan and the hazy reflection of the bright lights that should by rights be mine. I sat on the window sill and dreamed of all the gastronomic delights that were being served reverently by attentive waiters all over town, while a sullen Josefa clunked clumsy crockery onto the rickety table covered with a crumb-laden plastic cloth where we now took our meals. It was too much to be borne.

Bootsie came in while my mind's eye was combing the menu at Le Perigord. She carried a heavy sack which she thumped down onto the drainboard and then came over to me.

"Hi, honey," she cawed, "I just figgered out another way to cut down on our expenses." Beaming with pride, she flung a heavy arm across my shoulder. Her coat gave off the fusty fug of second-hand shops. "You know that vegetable market down the block? Well, they let me pick over all the stuff they were going to throw away. For free."

"Rotten apples?" I protested.

"Just a few spots. Josefa can make applesauce."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Behind her back Josefa made obscene gestures and mouthed indignities.

"And another thing," she rambled on, "now that we're living so cheap, it's about time we started living on *your* salary. That way, we can save all *my* money so we'll be in really good shape at the end of the trail."

She bent to kiss me. All I did was flinch. There was something so repellent to me in her greedy blue eyes, her lips which had not seen lipstick these many months, her lank brown hair that smelled of cheap laundry soap, that I couldn't help myself. Where was the slender, sweetly perfumed, exquisitely made-up blonde girl whose money I had fallen in love with less than a year ago? As I say, I flinched, and in so doing overbalanced and felt myself slipping off the window sill on the wrong side of the window. I grabbed. It was only natural. And the nearest thing to grab for was Bootsie's arm. There was some thrashing about. I can't describe it; I was in the midst of it. But when it was over, I was sprawled on the kitchen floor and Bootsie was nowhere in sight.

Until I looked out the window.

"Ooong!" came Josefa's voice over my shoulder. "She gong! You killing her!"

Indeed. She seemed quite dead, lying there among the dented beer cans and defunct perambulators at the bottom of the airshaft. But I would have to make sure before I could allow my fledgling hopes to take flight. Bruce came to the window and whined. I turned to Josefa. "It was an accident. You are a witness to that."

"Sí, sí. Han haccident. La pobrecita. You fight her. She fall hout."

"No. I was falling and she tried to save me. You saw it happen."

She smiled, a dreadful knowing gap-toothed grin. "Oh, sí. I saw. You want to heat now?" She began spooning beans into two of the three bowls.

"God, no! I have to call the police."

She shrugged and sat down at the table. There was no telephone in the apartment—Bootsie had declined to bear the expense—so I had to go down to the corner bodega where the public telephone was strategically positioned adjacent to the crates of dried codfish. I dialed 911 and waited. Nothing. I tried again. Still nothing, not even a crackle on the line to show a sign of life.

"The phone is dead," I said to the shopkeeper, a thin young man standing importantly behind a counter crowded with candy bars, shoelaces, and gum.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Yess," he said, "two, three months now they don't come to fix him. They say too much breaking the phone, taking the money, no more phone. What can I do? People around here don't have so much phones in the house. They come here to make phone call, buy a beer, buy a soda, buy some candy for the babies. Good for business, no? Now the phone don't work, they don't come. I'm only trying to make a living. Would I break the phone? I got a special on bananas today. Ten cents a pound. Take some home to your kids."

I looked at the special bananas. Bootsie would have loved them, soft and brown-spotted, lying dispiritedly in a cardboard box.

"No, thanks. I need to call the police. My wife is dead."

"¡Ay, Dios!" The young man quickly turned his attention to important business at the back of the store. I could have walked off with all his shoelaces and overripe bananas.

"Where can I find a phone?" I called after him.

He reappeared from behind a stack of six-packs, making shooing motions with his hands. "Closing up now. Go away, please. No phone here."

Back on the street I wondered which way to turn to make my call. The idea of Bootsie dead was still so new to me I needed official confirmation to make it real. And I needed to make sure that the call came from me, establishing her death as an accident. Well, it *was* an accident. Even though I'd been thinking about ways to kill Bootsie, I hadn't thought about this way. It just happened. If it hadn't been Bootsie at the bottom of the airshaft, it would have been me. Not that there'd been any kind of struggle—me trying to push her out, or her trying to push me out—oh, no, officer, just a sad case of a loving wife trying to help a loving husband, and the whole thing ending in tragedy. I put on my tragic face and glanced back up the block.

A squad car was just pulling up in front of the building and Josefa came rushing out to meet it.

I ran. It would never do to let Josefa have the first word. Her command of English was imperfect and she might give the wrong impression.

She saw me coming and screeched, "¡Asesino!"

I peered into the police car. Two faces peered back at me, one black and one unmistakably Irish. With any luck their command of Spanish was imperfect and they wouldn't understand that Josefa had called me a murderer. I grabbed Josefa and clutched her head consolingly to my shoulder. "There, there," I murmured, "everything

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

will be all right. Just shut your mouth and I'll cut you in on the will."

"The will? Ah, el testamento!" Her words were a breathy whisper flavored with pinto beans and onions. "She leave it all to me, you go to jail, you no make trouble. Mi abogado me lo ha dicho."

"Well, your lawyer was wrong." Canny Josefa. Obviously she had gained the impression that she benefited from Bootsie's will, and she wanted to make sure that I would be in no position to contest it. Some ally! I'd have to set her straight, and quickly. "Bootsie made a will when we got married," I whispered into her oiled black hair. "She left all her money to me. She told me so. Behave yourself and I'll take care of you."

Black eyes squinted up at me. "¿Verdad?"

"I swear."

After a flood of Spanish invective Josefa nodded and said, "Ho-kay." Then she turned on the waterworks.

The two policemen had by this time gotten out of the car and come over to see what the trouble was.

"We got a call about a body at the bottom of an airshaft at this address?"

I glanced at Josefa. She nodded. "I use the telephone of el super." She cried some more.

"My wife," I told them. "It's terrible. She fell out the window. Right before my eyes. There was nothing I could do."

Josefa howled agreement.

We trooped through the building and out the back door. I saw the round pale face of the super staring at us from the grimy window of his basement apartment. From other windows surrounding the airshaft other faces stared down. The night was very quiet and no one threw any garbage. After a while an ambulance came and took Bootsie away.

When it was all over, after all the questions had been asked and poor Bootsie's remains had been shipped back to West Texas for burial next to those of her sorrowful mother and her high-flying daddy, the lawyers came to town. Josefa and I were summoned to their hotel suite for the reading of the will. The suite reminded me poignantly of my early days with Bootsie, days that I would be able to relive, alas, without her at my side.

The lawyers' first words were ominous.

"This is a very odd will," said one.

"Odd, but quite legal," said the other.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Get on with it," I snapped. If they wanted to continue to administer the estate, they had better get used to treating me as their employer and learn to show respect.

"Well," said Lawyer One, he of the round gold-rimmed spectacles and thinning hair, "she left everything to Bruce."

"Bruce!" My voice, I'm embarrassed to say, emerged in a squeak. "That's impossible! You can't leave money to a dog!"

"Well, you can," said Lawyer Two, long-faced and mournful. "You can and she did. But don't worry. You're both taken care of."

Josefa tugged at my sleeve. "¿Que dice?" she demanded, her dark eyes showing signs of an approaching storm.

"Relax," I told her, and settled back to hear the news.

Lawyer One bent his gold-rimmed spectacles to the blue-backed document and spouted about ten minutes of legalese. For another ten minutes Lawyer Two translated. What it boiled down to was this. Bootsie's fortune, and it was considerable, belonged to Bruce, for his lifetime. Josefa and I were appointed his guardians. We were charged with responsibility for his health and well-being. We were to buy him a ranch in West Texas and anything else his doggy heart desired.

We were to live on the ranch with him, keep him company, find him a suitable lady dog to share his bliss, and in general make his life a canine heaven on earth.

My agile mind instantly perceived that Bruce would require a Rolls-Royce for trips to the vet, a swimming pool to cool off in on hot West Texas afternoons, a tennis court on which to chase balls and a nine-hole golf course in which to bury bones, not to mention a bevy of nubile serving wenches to curry his coat and stuff him with dog biscuits.

If, by chance, Bruce predeceased his guardians, the money was to go to create the Bootsie and Bruce Foundation for Indigent Wildcatters. If either Josefa or I died before Bruce did, the surviving guardian was to have total control of the estate, subject to the advice of Goldrims and Longface. And if we both kicked off before the mutt, the legal beagles took charge.

I looked at Josefa. She looked back murderous questions.

"How old is Bruce?" I asked her.

She shrugged incomprehension.

"¿Cuantos años tiene Bruce?" Out of necessity, I'd picked up a smattering of her lingo. She understood more than she let on and liked to pretend ignorance when it suited her.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Dos, tres años. Yo no sé," she replied, followed by a muttered stream of abuse a la Zapata.

I nodded my agreement to the lawyers. A two- or three-year-old dog has another ten or twelve years in him. Contesting the will would take up precious time, during which I would be forced to work. Although Bruce was presently enfeebled by city life and poor diet, I would soon get him back in peak condition in the salubrious air of West Texas. And somehow, during his lifetime, I would figure out some way of gaining full control of Bootsie's money, or die trying. It was worth a period of exile.

The ranch is huge, acre upon acre of sagebrush and saguero, and the ranch house sprawls like an adobe version of Buckingham Palace. Josefa lives in her wing, surrounded by freeloading relatives. I live in mine, solaced by a rotating troop of imported beauties that make the Dallas Cowgirls look like bovine battleaxes. Ever since Josefa sent over her cousin Elizondo and his machete (I bear an interesting scar; Elizondo bears a chastened look at the imprint of my teeth on the remains of his left ear), my wing has been guarded by day and night Pinkertons. Josefa, unaccountably, believes I have attempted to poison her pinto beans and has posted platoons of grinning cousins in the kitchen and outside her quarters.

Bruce lives in oriental splendor in luxurious kennels out back. His every desire is satisfied. He is attended by emissaries of both camps, nymphs and caballeros. Occasionally Josefa and I meet on neutral ground in Bruce's domain, when we both thoughtfully examine his muzzle for the first telltale sign of gray hairs, his joints for arthritis, and his fine brown eyes for the clouding over of cataracts. The years are going by.

It's a dog's life.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

She had been a teacher of English for many years. Howard was the most difficult student she ever had. What was to become of him in this world?

A SCHOOLTEACHER'S LOT

by CLEMENTS JORDAN

I had hoped never to see him again, but six years later here he was in the same room. Although he had changed greatly, he looked, somehow, just as I might have expected—harder-eyed, shiftier, weaker around the mouth. Although he could not see me, we were facing each other and my opinion was important to him.

We first met when he entered my senior English class during the last six weeks of the school year. I had been absent with an illness and someone else had enrolled him. When I checked attendance at the beginning of third period and called, "Howard Banker," I received no reply. Seeing an unfamiliar student in the last row, scrunching down so that he was nearly invisible, I asked, "Is that your name?"

"Nope, the name's Barker."

I looked again. His name had been written in and I now saw that one letter was more like an "r" than an "n." "Excuse me," I said, "I see now it is Barker."

"Are you the regular teach?"

"I am the regular *teacher*, yes. My name is Miss Milliken. Please take this seat here across from my desk."

"I want *this* seat. I couldn't get that through to that creep in here yesterday, Miss-er-Milk Cow." No one laughed.

"All students are alphabetically seated, so this is your correct seat. Also, you must speak politely to and of your teachers. Now tell me, have you been furnished with textbooks? A Shakespeare and a grammar book?" I saw no books on his desk.

"Yeah."

"Where are they?"

"In the locker."

© 1980 by Clements Jordan.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"You must go and get them. Here, take this hall pass to be signed in the office before you can return."

He left with deliberate steps, flipping his hand in a wave to the class when he reached the door. I breathed for calmness, reminding myself to allow for weakness after my virus attack.

I knew the office was hectic and time-consuming, but after twenty minutes I pressed the button on the intercom and asked about him. No one there had seen him but they promised to look him up. A few minutes later a monitor escorted him into the classroom. He had been found smoking in the boys' room.

He slouched down in his seat, still minus books. "I have no choice but to give you a cut for the day and will have to do so each time you come unprepared to work," I said.

"Go right ahead," he answered coolly.

Three o'clock found me checking his records with the guidance counselor—poor attendance, suspensions, low grades. He had left his former school in another state under a cloud. His parents were divorced and his mother, unable to cope with him, had sent him here to live with his father, hoping the father could supply firmer management. He had been supposed to be graduated the year before, but his grades had been failing.

"But my class is an advanced one," I pointed out. "How can a student with his poor average do well in Shakespeare and composition?"

"I get the impression that he is not stupid and if anyone can interest and challenge him, you can." Mrs. Lambert can be persuasive. "He has unfortunately been placed in classes of too low level to interest him and it's brought out all the worst in him."

"Yes, I experienced some of that today." I described his behavior.

"Well, suppose I talk to him and get him straightened out by third period tomorrow and you just let me know if you have any further trouble."

Good luck, I thought, not at all satisfied. Difficult students were no novelty to me, a veteran of forty years of teaching, but I sensed that this boy was beyond mere mischief. There was something unreadable in his eyes. I could not believe he would be easy to reach.

We were studying *Macbeth*, that play of grim compulsions, and I practised the moving passage in which Macbeth realizes what he must give up: —"honour, love, obedience, troops of friends I must not look to have." I planned to ask the students to consider the alternatives he mentioned: "Curses, not loud but deep, mouth hon-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

our, breath which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not." I wanted them to realize the pain of living with disrespect and insincerity, though outwardly secure. Some of my students were capable of deep insights and I was looking forward to their reactions.

Howard Barker shrugged and cast up his eyes when I called his name at roll call. His books were before him but he ostentatiously left them closed when I asked the class to open them at a certain page. While I read the passage aloud, Howard yawned audibly, stretched out his legs, and kicked my desk with a "thuck." I ignored him, but several students near him looked uneasy.

I invited the class to think of Macbeth's probable future in terms of human relationships. Howard raised his hand and I felt pleased at having interested him. I called on him.

"No problem," he announced breezily. "Kings those days didn't take any guff. Anybody looked at them crosseyed, off with their heads. It was great being a king back then."

In vain I tried to lead the class into rational discussion. I asked them to remember that Macbeth, who thought it so important to be a king, was a human being with feelings first and a king second. A few tried to talk but were shouted down by Howard who said they were stupid and the whole thing was "a bunch of garbage." He had seen it on TV and everybody in the dumb play either got killed or went bananas and if his old lady hadn't wanted to see it, he sure would have turned it off.

The class was wasted. Counting the day before, I would have to admit that two classes had been unsuccessful. The crowning indignity was the smirk of satisfaction on Howard's face as he left the room.

The next day I passed out study sheets with questions I required to be answered in their notebooks as a mastery of facts. I had foreseen Howard's ploys and was prepared to deal with him. I had an extra notebook and pen which I furnished to him, telling him he could pay for them later if he wished. But he handed me the money sullenly. I told him he could work with his neighbor, Connie Bensen, until he had read the play. I told him I wanted to see him in my room at three o'clock. He muttered something that sounded like "old cow."

He accomplished little. Connie was an excellent student, an original thinker, articulate on paper, but she was used to working alone. Howard, planning to copy her paper, was hopelessly lost. Connie merely showed him the place in the play so that he was forced to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

read for answers. He grew restless and asked to leave the room. I refused permission. Finally he put his head on his desk for a nap.

That afternoon he strolled into the room ten minutes late, lowered himself into his desk, and began to talk. I held up my hand for silence and forced myself to finish writing a lesson plan. I then deliberately laid aside my notebook and gave him my attention. I explained the class objectives—to understand the play in terms of historical setting, customs, and beliefs of the day; to understand the motivation of the characters; to be able to interpret some of the important passages. Above all, the students were required to write a paper which would count one-third toward their final grades, and it would be wise for him to begin it in another week. "You must begin to apply yourself in class and at home," I finished. "You need this credit to graduate. Read this play very carefully within the next two nights and if you have any trouble, come to me after three. I am here most afternoons until four o'clock."

"I can read all right. I don't need help. I don't need any part of this goofy stuff. What good will something like this do me?"

"All knowledge is worth only what the learner makes of it. You chose this course and—"

"I never chose it either! My old man picked it out on account of you. Said you taught him, that you was a good teacher. You've done nothing but give me a hard time!"

I, who prided myself on my memory for students, had not recalled Howard's father. Small wonder. He had been quiet and likable, only an average student but anxious to do his best—nothing like this aggressive, hostile youth. It was newly impressed on me every day how different parents and children were, for my teaching had spanned both generations.

"I was fond of your father and, as I said, I am ready to help you if you need me. I require order in the classroom. You must do your work and take your proper turn in discussion."

Giving me a scornful glance, he levered himself out of his chair, touched his fingers to his head in an impertinent salute, bringing his thumb down to his nose in a finish I was not supposed to see—or was I?

I can't pretend our relations were much improved after our talk. He challenged me at every turn. Every day he tried to provoke me into losing my temper. Many times he came dangerously near to succeeding. I considered myself a competent teacher with a reputation for fairness, regarded with respect by my students. Howard

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

made me feel plain, overweight, "uncool." It was many years since I had so disliked a student.

The next week I took most of a period to set standards for a paper. A choice of subjects was presented. Outlines, footnotes, and references were reviewed. The students were reminded how much the paper counted. A rough draft was due in ten days. After they received it back, they would have another ten days to prepare it in its final form. I wrote the dates due on the board. I then announced a test in two more days.

The test was a short one, all true and false, but there were two different copies. I distributed them in alternate rows. This device made it so difficult to cheat that it was unnecessary to monitor the students, so I was free to check other papers. Howard kept glancing toward Connie's desk and I smiled when I thought of his frustration when he realized their tests were different.

Howard scored a zero. I looked at his paper in disbelief. Even guessing might have earned him some points. On a hunch I compared his paper with Connie's. His answers were identical, even to her incorrect one. He had not bothered to read the questions.

When he saw his grade, he seemed stunned for a moment. He looked at Connie's paper and saw that she had received a 98. He demanded to see it and for the first time read the questions. Red suffused his neck and face. Fury gleamed in his eyes, but something else as well—the respect that his kind feels only for those meaner than themselves. He lingered after class, leaned over my desk, and stated rather than asked, "You are not going to count this grade."

"Why should you think that?"

"Because I just got here. It wouldn't be fair to grade me on something I haven't had."

"You've been here long enough to have read this play. And speaking of fairness, have you been fair?"

He tried to meet my eyes but failed.

"Why do you use someone else's brain when you have one of your own?" I looked at him so steadily that he did not bother to deny anything. He walked silently from the room.

What could I do about him? For him? I returned to the guidance counselor with no satisfactory results. Mrs. Lambert prided herself on her "friendly" relations with students and had had her "talk" with Howard. She ever so subtly hinted that perhaps I was still weak from my illness, and I got the impression, somehow, that she thought my age was beginning to show. In my early years a re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fractory student was sent to the principal and paddled or reprimanded, according to the seriousness of his behavior. Many times I had handled the problem by reasoning with the student or calling his parents who had dealt effectively with him. Now the principal was an "administrator" and guidance counselors thought most problems stemmed from "broken homes" and poverty. Parents were often uncooperative. But I had known Howard's father. I called him that night and made an appointment.

The next afternoon Kenneth Barker walked into my classroom after more than twenty-five years. I saw a superficial resemblance between him and Howard, although the father was not as tall and handsome as his son. Kenneth's eyes were steady and his mouth was firm. He had a "nice" face.

After preliminary pleasantries we got down to business. I was not surprised to learn that he had no idea Howard was having trouble in school—with me or with his work. He and his wife were divorced when Howard was three and he had won custody. She, however, had stolen Howard from nursery school. She had remarried and had been living states away and Kenneth had been unable to trace them. Howard had grown up tough and street-wise, attending school just sufficiently to avoid courts. He had trafficked in drugs and had been caught recently. His stepfather had refused to keep him any longer and Kenneth had at last got his son back.

"I know you have to be fair to your other students and not give Howard favors, but please do what you can for him. I'm afraid he won't graduate at all if he fails this year."

I said I could make allowances for a poor grade but not for cheating. After discussion I agreed to give him a different test for another grade and I explained about the paper, urging him to prod Howard. I was more hopeful after he left. Kenneth was so decent and caring.

During the next week Howard behaved in what he considered a model way: fawningly polite; insisting on sharpening my pencils; reporting to me several times that other students were talking or not paying attention. I could hardly hide my distaste. He passed the second test—barely.

Three days before it was due, I reminded the class about the rough draft of their papers. Howard stopped by my desk and asked, "What do you want a rough draft for? Isn't a final copy enough?" I explained how it benefited the student, helping him to organize the paper and eliminate mistakes. "It won't help me—just extra work for nothing," he flared, showing his temper for the first time in a week.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Sorry," I said, "it's my requirement for everyone." He dealt me an ill-wishing glance and strode out.

He handed me a paper so full of mistakes that it needed almost a complete rewriting. There being insufficient room in the margins, I used a whole sheet of notepaper to list the errors and omissions, and to make suggestions. After class I found my notepaper crumpled in his desk.

The following week he gave up trying to charm me, but he handed in a paper. With a sinking heart I saw that it was too poorly done to deserve a passing grade. When I handed back the paper, he glanced at his grade, tore the paper to pieces, and scattered them on the floor, and left the room, banging the door behind him.

During the few days left in the term I reviewed for exams. Howard sat rigidly in his seat each day, making no effort to participate in class, opening no book, taking no notes. If he listened to anything I said, I could not tell. His exam was the poorest I had ever received in all my years as a teacher. I took it to the conference on failing students that we held each year, to show it to the principal, the guidance counselors, and the other teachers.

I explained about the tests, the papers, and exam, stating that I had no choice but to fail him. His other teachers said he had done poorly but had scraped by. Mrs. Lambert recounted his "unfortunate" past. The principal steepled his fingers, regarded them thoughtfully, and finally said, "It seems to be up to you, Miss Milliken, whether we give this boy his diploma."

"Do you feel that it is my fault he failed, Mr. Bellamy?" I asked.

"Of course not. We all know you are a splendid teacher. But this youngster is not academic material. Regardless of whether he gets a diploma, this will be his last year. Why send him away with one less chance to support himself? It might, indeed, cause him to get into further trouble."

"Then you think it's better to give him something he hasn't earned? Something he has made no effort to deserve?"

"He has been with us only six weeks and adjustment must have been hard for him. He has had a rough time. I hardly see how he could have been expected to read Shakespeare and learn to write term papers in that short time. It probably wouldn't help him in whatever he chooses to do."

I fought an absurd desire to laugh—the mature and educated principal was giving me the same argument I had had from Howard. The fact that he had brought with him a failing grade and been

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

placed in the wrong class seemed to count for nothing. I bowed to the inevitable and went home with a churning stomach.

A possible solution came to me in the night and I wrote it out for the principal. I could coach Howard over this summer and he could earn his diploma at the August graduation of summer-school pupils. This way he would not feel that he could get something for nothing and he would have been longer under the influence of his father and school discipline.

Howard was waiting for me in the car lot the next morning. "Am I going to pass English?" he demanded. I could not discuss my plans until I had talked them over with the principal. "You are not supposed to be at school today," I hedged. "Grades won't be posted until this afternoon."

"Tell me *now*. You know. It's not that I care. My old man keeps bugging me and when I get that diploma I'm cutting out."

"This afternoon," I repeated. I walked past him although for a minute I felt he would bar my way. "Thanks a heap, Miss Milk Cow," he yelled after me.

Only when I reached my room did I realize how tense my neck muscles were. I sat down to reason with myself. Admittedly Shakespeare was not essential to leading a worthwhile life. But what about honest labor and assuming responsibility for one's actions? What about respect for others and cooperation with those who tried to help one?

Slowly I tore up the note I had written Mr. Bellamy. I had done as much for Howard as he deserved. Why burden myself with him all summer?

At the graduation ceremony, I sat in the row reserved for senior teachers and saw Howard get his diploma. He tapped me on the shoulder with it as he marched out behind me. When I looked up in the semidarkness, he saluted me—this time with his thumb openly at his nose.

Now here we were, though he could not know I was present. The strong light showed him in detail—his features, his dark clothing, the visored cap protruding from one pocket. With him were three other men and from a distance the four looked alike, for they were similar in height and build.

I had been a customer in the grocery store the night before when a masked man had held up the owner. It was near closing time. I had been the only customer and was hidden by shelves so that the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thief had thought the owner alone. Seeing the gun, the owner wisely handed over the money and submitted to being tied up.

I had played a heroine's part in calling the police from the phone there in the store and my quick action enabled them to apprehend a man, not running, but walking very fast. He did not have a gun or a large sum of money, but that proved nothing except, perhaps, an opportunity to conceal them or a confederate to hand them to.

Yes, I said, I had had a good look at the criminal for the store had good lighting and I had been fairly close. He had worn a mask and a cap with a visor, but I could recognize the suit and the cap—women noticed clothes.

To my satisfaction I was called as a witness for the prosecution. I had been lax in my duty to Howard once, not making him face up to responsibilities. I was determined not to repeat my mistake.

Looking around, I saw many people I knew. At least three of my former pupils were on the jury. My opinion would count.

Howard's lawyer pleaded that his client was being prosecuted on circumstantial evidence only. He worked in a fix-it shop there in the shopping center and had been hurrying home from work. The time of his shop's closing had checked out in his favor. The opposing lawyer pointed out that the proximity gave Howard a good opportunity to learn the store's hours. The owner testified that Howard was the right size.

When I stated in my no-nonsense teacher's voice that I was sure beyond any reasonable doubt that Howard was the guilty man, his composure broke. "She's got it in for me! She never liked me," he yelled, and was restrained by his lawyer.

"How could it be personal?" I asked reasonably. "When he committed the crime, he was masked. How could I recognize him as anyone I knew?" Two of the jurors nodded. No one remarked that he had not been masked in the lineup.

Howard was sentenced to six years for armed robbery. He looked at me, his eyes dull, as he left the courtroom. It was the sort of thing he would do, I thought. He was as dishonest and as rebellious of authority as ever—stupid as ever too, not even checking to make sure the owner really was alone. I have no regrets. He *could* have been the one.

"Q"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* short story by

GEORGE BAXT

George Baxt has a "touch" that is all his own. His newest story, about two actors in Hollywood, old friends who had not seen each other in many years, illustrates the subtle relationship that can exist between style and substance . . .

WHAT YOU BEEN UP TO LATELY?

by GEORGE BAXT

Richard Weiler carefully maneuvered his wife's Mercedes Benz along Sunset Boulevard. The traffic wasn't particularly heavy in the early afternoon, but he was anxious to avoid any dents or scrapes. It was known to his friends that he respected the car more than he did the woman. Elissa had been a beautiful bride, her family's wealth easily enhancing her attractiveness, but twenty years ago when he watched her coming slowly down the aisle on her father's arm, he was very much in love with her. Today he loved nothing, just the feel of the magnificent vehicle as he idled along and the exhilarating sense of a newly discovered freedom that had blossomed a few hours earlier.

Elissa was gone, leaving behind the Mercedes, a bored husband and, somewhere out there in the world, a nineteen-year-old son and an eighteen-year-old daughter who had flown the nest with what Richard considered unbecoming alacrity. He repositioned the mirror for a good look at himself. After a moment's careful consideration he decided he looked better than he had in months. The face familiar from numerous television commercials ("Diabolica will kill your crab grass!"—"Ahhhh, the smooth, easy taste of decaffeinated Bol-

© 1980 by George Baxt.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

luta!" etc.) now reflected a somewhat sheepish grin revealing magnificent white teeth against a background of carefully shaded tanned skin. Oh, yes, thought Richard, I feel like a new man.

I feel like a new life. I need a new world. I could use a drink. He kept his eye out for a bar. He couldn't decide which was shabbier, the few pedestrians or the palm trees. He remembered a charming bar he used to frequent years ago when he was a struggling young actor. Come to think of it, that's where he was first introduced to Elissa, in that charming bar across from the bus terminal. Behind the building that housed the bar had been a small theater where a German refugee held acting classes. Richard didn't learn much about acting, but he perfected a superb German accent. And he made friends. And he met Elissa and they were married and now they were parted and there straight ahead was the bus terminal.

So shabby, Los Angeles is so shabby, he thought. The bus terminal looked filthy and unloved and there was no bar across the street. There was a bench in front of the bus terminal with a solitary occupant, a man who appeared to be Richard's age. Memory of an earlier friendship began to nag. There was something familiar about this man sitting on the bench. He was hatless and the shock of hair hanging over his ears reminded Richard of the one good friend he had made in acting class, Augustus Locke. The cavalier and devil-may-care Augustus who aspired to Shakespeare and Ibsen and all things esthetic and beautiful, all things alien to Hollywood. Augie the original, the madman who once climbed the old Hollywood sign and then hung by his knees from the H.

"Now *that's* macho," Richard remembered saying to Elissa.

And Elissa said with a sniff of disinterest, "Macho do about nothing."

My God. Oh, my God. Richard remembered. Elissa had been Augie's girl!

He pulled over to the curb for a better look at the man on the bench. It was at least ten years since he had last seen Augie, but he could never forget that face, those beautiful classical features that cried for matinee-idol acclaim but were in the wrong city. Richard rolled down the window and shouted, "Augie?"

The man leaped to his feet. His right hand went to his inside jacket pocket.

"Hey, Augie, it's me! Richard! Richard Weiler!"

Slowly Augustus Locke lowered his right hand. He seemed to move slowly toward the Mercedes with caution, as though he dis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

trusted even the sound of a familiar voice. He squinted against the glare of the hard harsh sun.

Richard conjured up the ugly guttural German accent from the bowels of memory. "Iss nod enuff to be secksy, Herr Locke, muss also sprechen zer dialock zo awdience hunderstands, fahrshtay?"

"Fahrshtay," said Augustus softly and now approached the automobile with confidence. He stuck his hand through the window, meeting Richard's and shaking it with vigor. "Of all the people I never expected to run into today."

"You looked as though you didn't want to run into any people. I thought for a minute there you were going to pull a gun on me."

Augustus said nothing but found a smile.

Richard continued, "What you been up to lately?"

"Well, right now I'm waiting for a bus to San Diego."

"Where's your car?"

Augustus looked sheepish. "I totaled it yesterday. It's a miracle I'm alive."

"I'm glad you are. I've thought a lot about you lately. If I'd known where to reach you . . ." He heard himself sounding like almost everyone else in his profession. *"We must get in touch sometime." "I've been meaning to call you." "I swear I never got your message."*

Augustus roared with laughter. "That old Hollywood jazz! Well, I see you're doing great! A Mercedes yet! You seem to be in every commercial on the tube." His voice softened. "How's Elissa?"

"How's about a drink?"

Augustus thought for a moment. "I really have to make that bus."

"What's so urgent?"

"Well . . ." he seemed to be fumbling for an explanation. "You see, there's this guy I need to connect with in San Diego and then we're driving into Mexico. I got this deal going."

"Come on. There are lots of buses to San Diego but not enough old friends. Come on, Augie, let's go talk a while. Let's indulge, get corny over the old days."

Augie thought a moment, looked warily over his shoulder to the bus terminal, and then got into the car.

Ten minutes later they sat at a bar Richard found at the foot of Fairfax Avenue. Maggie the barperson brought them two beers, set a plate of peanuts between them, and crossed to the kitchen.

"Had I known you and Elissa were finished," said Augustus as he scooped up some peanuts, "I'd have shown up sooner. That's the girl I should have married, but you beat me to it."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Richard chuckled and then sipped his beer. "Say, what happened to that dreary dame who used to make up our foursome? You know, the one who was all art but no craft. I can see her like she's standing in front of us. Blazing red hair pulled back and tied in a tight bun. A big pearl earring attached to each lobe. Sweater and skirt, always sweater and skirt. Nice hips but no bosom to speak of. God how I disliked her. Now what was her name again?"

"Madeline. Madeline Longley."

"Madeline! That's it, Madeline. I wonder what became of her."

"I married her."

Richard's face reddened as he stared at Augustus. "Hell, I'm sorry. I mean I—"

Augustus was laughing uncontrollably. His head was flung back and his chest was heaving. Maggie, returning from the kitchen and carrying a tray of clean glasses, wondered if he was having a fit.

"Oh, God," gasped Augie, "oh, my God, that was funny." He wiped the tears from his eyes with a paper napkin. "How I wish I had heard that description eighteen years ago before I decided to marry her."

Richard stared hard at Augustus. He sensed there was something wrong with the man. He kept looking over his shoulder and every so often he patted his jacket where the inside breast pocket would be, as though seeking reassurance from something the pocket contained. The laughter was almost maniacal. From the ferocity with which he had chomped on the peanuts, Richard expected to see blood come trickling from Augie's mouth.

"That last time we met—in Grauman's lobby, remember—"

"Sure, it was at least ten years ago, but I remember."

"That wasn't Madeline you were with."

"No . . . can't remember that one's name. Some bimbo I picked up somewhere." Augie's face hardened as he stared into his beer. "Madeline and I weren't much of a marriage. I didn't make it as an actor. That was her first disappointment. Then we couldn't have any children—that was her second disappointment. Then she found out I was steadily unfaithful. So she turned to religion and illness. When she wasn't in church, she was in the hospital."

"You still married?"

Augie was watching Maggie carefully giving the glasses a second polish. She was fastidious. He liked that in people. She took pride in her bar. He could see in the way it was all so neatly laid out. She was what his father would have called a fine figure of a woman, for

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sure. Her eyes caught his. He felt something stirring and was astonished. She was not his type at all. He winked, she smiled, and he turned to Richard.

"Funny us running into each other like this today. I wish it had been last week."

"Oh, yeah? Why?"

"It would have been different, that's all." There was an awkward silence, and then Augie asked, "Where are your kids?"

"Gone. Flown." My son's in New York, or at least he was when he last sent a postcard. He was in some drug rehabilitation program. I hope he stuck it out."

"And the girl?"

"I don't know. I'm not sure. She always liked kids. Maybe she's working with kids somewhere." Richard was sounding morose, and that was not what he had in mind for himself. He was free of Elissa and he'd been driving around trying to find a new avenue for himself. He tried to explain this to Augustus who kept nodding his head but was actually retaining little of what he heard, his mind now containing an olio of his next sip of beer, Maggie behind the bar, and getting to San Diego.

"Augie?" asked Richard.

"What? What is it?" His eyes were wide and he was sneaking a quick look over his shoulder.

"You're not listening to me."

"Sure I am! Anyway, listen old buddy, I got to get back to the bus terminal." He was toying with Richard's car keys. Richard had placed them on the bar between their drinks.

"I'll drive you back as soon as we finish our drinks. Unless you're in that big a hurry—"

"Oh, no, no. It's great running into each other like this again."

"When do you get back from Mexico?"

"I'm not sure."

"I just thought we'd get together again."

"That would be great. Believe me, I really have missed seeing you, shooting the breeze the way we used to, rehearsing our scenes together . . . and those times we'd do nothing but compare poverty."

They both laughed and Maggie smiled. She liked the actor she recognized from the television commercials. He was suave and smooth and obviously a gentleman. And she'd been very impressed by the Mercedes when she noticed Richard pulling into the adjoining parking lot. But his companion made her nervous and uneasy. His

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eyes had what she would later describe as "a very haunted look, like the banshees were after him." And there was something unsettling about the way he kept looking over his shoulder and patting his jacket as though maybe there was some weapon hidden there.

Richard was staring at the ceiling. "Old Meyerbeer?" Augustus had asked him if he knew what had become of their German drama instructor. "Well, I'll tell you. Last I heard he went back to Germany where he directed a new translation of *King Lear* in which Lear not only does not go mad but throws those rotten daughters of his into exile."

"You're putting me on."

"I kid you not. Elissa saw the production in Munich. She was traveling with her mother. She couldn't wait to get home to tell me about it." His voice softened. "Those were back in the days when she couldn't wait to get home to me."

Maggie had turned on the radio on a shelf above the glasses and was worrying the tuner.

Augustus said, "I'd sure love to see Elissa again. That beautiful blonde hair, that white white skin, that gash of red mouth. By God, she was a looker! Has she changed much?"

"Elissa was rich enough to afford not to change much. Still blonde, skin still white, still the red gash of mouth, but the eyes got steely."

"I'd sure love to see her." Augustus sounded as wistful as a small penniless child with its nose pressed against the window of a candy store.

"Well, if I thought she was back at the house, I'd drive you there. But I don't think she's there."

Augustus clapped a hand on Richard's shoulder. "Man, I think it's time we started making tracks."

"Sure, sure." Richard raised his stein to drink it.

Maggie found the news on the radio and was listening intently. The announcer was reading carefully and without emotional commitment. Richard and Augustus stared at the radio. They had heard a familiar name. ". . . the brutally battered body of Madeline Locke was found in the bedroom of her Topanga Canyon home this morning by a neighbor who said she had seen the victim's husband drive away early yesterday morning. Augustus Locke is wanted for questioning in his wife's murder. Late yesterday morning a wrecked car found near Mr. Locke's home was identified as belonging to the suspect—"

Richard was staring at the snub-nosed revolver Augustus had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

taken from his inside jacket pocket and was pointing at Richard's chest.

"Augie," whispered Richard.

Augustus got to his feet and with his free hand took the keys to the Mercedes. Maggie held her breath and silently prayed to the Jesus she loved to deliver both herself and the handsome actor. "I'll try not to total the Mercedes." Augie was backing away to the door. "Don't follow me out."

For reasons he would never be able to explain to himself, Richard restrained a wild urge to burst out laughing. *What you been up to lately,* he had asked Augie earlier. Well, he certainly found out.

Augustus was smiling as he ran out the door.

"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!" cried Maggie as she rushed to the phone.

"Wait!" The mixture of harshness and urgency in Richard's voice stopped her. "Not yet," said Richard. "Let's give him a head start."

"But—but he's a murderer."

"They'll catch him. He won't get away. But let's give him this break. He's never really had a decent break in his life."

What a magnificent car, thought Augustus, what a truly magnificent car. Now if *I* had married Elissa, this would have been *my* car. And the marriage would have worked. That's what was wrong. Elissa and I were meant for each other until Richard came along. Beautiful, beautiful Elissa of the blonde hair, white skin, and red gash of a mouth. Ugly whining sickly Madeline. How did I put up with her under the same roof all these years?

The Mercedes was headed south for the San Diego freeway when the patrol car spied it and gave chase, siren screaming. But Augie's mind was elsewhere. It was dwelling on the unfairness and inequity of life and what a rotten shuffle he himself had got. His foot pressed the accelerator and the Mercedes seemed to be fighting him. He began losing control of the steering wheel and soon he was in the wrong lane with a truck bearing down on him. He swerved to avoid the collision and instead sent the car plummeting over the edge of the road into a ravine that lay hundreds of feet beneath.

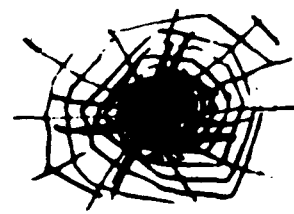
The Mercedes rolled over and over. First, the roof was torn away, and then both right fenders wrenched free with sickening groans. Augie's door sprang open and he tried desperately to hold on to the wheel, but blood was streaming down his face and his right arm was broken and he knew both his legs were shattered and he was nearing

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the end of the tragi-comedy known as the life of Augustus Locke.

When the Mercedes hit the bottom of the ravine, the door to the trunk was flung open and Augustus, thrown from the car, and just a few moments away from death, stared with pleasure at the person he had so longed to see once more. She had fallen out of the trunk, her head hanging loosely, the neck broken. But the blonde hair and the white skin were still beautiful, though the red gash of lips was now a large ugly stain caked with blood. Elissa, my beloved, my beautiful Elissa.

What you been up to lately?



DETECTIVERSE

A MAN OF CONVICTIONS

by WILLIAM F. SMITH

Caught, tried, and found guilty,
Then sentenced to jail,
Staid bank robber Willie
Did not even quail.
"Though I'm locked behind bars
And unable to roam,
State prison for me
Is just arrest home."

© 1980 by William F. Smith.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a *NEW* Dr. Sam Hawthorne story by

EDWARD D. HOCH

Our favorite retired-doctor detective, Dr. Sam Hawthorne of Northmont, New England, leafs through the pages of his memory-scrapbook, travels back in his own time machine a half century, and recollects how he fell in love that summer of 1929 and how this led him to a Mary Celeste *case, twentieth-century version, and every bit as "impossible" and "unsolvable" as the original mystery . . . Help yourself to a small—ah—libation and enjoy another "miracle problem" . . .*

THE PROBLEM OF THE GINGERBREAD HOUSEBOAT

by EDWARD D. HOCH

"This was in the summer of 1929," Dr. Sam Hawthorne began, warming to the subject as he always did. "My leg's bothering me a bit today, but you can help yourself to a small libation. Oh, and fill my glass again too, will you? Thanks. Now where was I? Oh, yes, the summer of '29. I suppose in a way it was the end of an era, because the country was never really the same after that summer. October brought the stock market crash and the beginning of the Great Depression. But for that summer, life went on as it always had . . ."

We had a little lake not far from Northmont (Dr. Sam continued), and some of the people had cottages where they went in the summer. It was called Chester Lake, after one of the area's early landowners, and it was about a mile wide by maybe five miles long. As it happened, that was the summer I fell in love—with a dark-haired girl

© 1980 by Edward D. Hoch.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

named Miranda Grey who was just out of college and spending the summer with her aunt and uncle.

It was my eighth summer in Northmont, my ninth since getting out of medical school, and as my nurse April kept reminding me at every opportunity, it was about time I settled down and got married. The trouble was, in a town as small as Northmont where most families were my patients, it was difficult to work up any romantic interest in someone I'd treated for mumps or chicken pox just a few years earlier. I suppose that was why Miranda's arrival became such a big event in my life. The fact that she was ten years younger than me didn't seem important at all.

Her aunt and uncle, Kitty and Jason Grey, spent the summer at their Chester Lake cottage. Jason was a teacher over in Shinn Corners, so he had the whole summer off. I knew them slightly, though they'd never been my patients. Not, at least, until that day in late June when April announced that Kitty Grey was in my waiting room with her niece Miranda. She'd been giving Miranda a quick tour of Northmont when a windblown speck landed in the young girl's eye. My office was close by and they'd come to me for relief.

I was glad to give it. Miranda's big brown eyes teared up as I rolled back the lid and removed the offending speck. I guess it was pretty close to being love at first sight, at least on my part. "Thank you, Doctor," she said, and her voice was like music.

During the next few weeks I saw a great deal of Miranda Grey. I took her for rides in my tan Packard Runabout, and even escorted her to a barn dance on the weekend following the Fourth of July. On Sundays we picnicked at the lake and I found myself becoming a familiar figure at the Grey cottage.

The identical cottage next door was owned by a rather odd but friendly couple, Ray and Gretel Hauser. I knew little about them except that they were from Boston and had some money. Ray was a handsome man in his early forties who dabbled in real estate and stocks. His wife was small and flighty and a bit overweight. They were friends of the Greys and the two couples often dined together. But the Hausers' chief claim to fame was a flat-bottomed houseboat, the *Gretel*, which they launched each spring on the lake's placid waters. It had a shingled roof, fancy windows, and all sorts of gaudy ornamentation on the outside. The first time Miranda saw it she'd remarked, "It looks just like a gingerbread house!"

Mrs. Hauser liked that. "Ray and I are like Hansel and Gretel. When my money runs out we'll start eating the houseboat."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Her husband merely scoffed. "The way the market is climbing we won't have to worry about that!"

On that first day Miranda and I strolled down to the dock to get a better view of the houseboat. Of course Kitty and Jason had been on it plenty of times before, but Miranda hadn't, and Kitty urged Ray to take her aboard. "Come on, Ray, I want Miranda to see the inside!"

Jason, wearing a red jacket that seemed to be his summer uniform, tried to quiet her, but Kitty was insistent. She was a pretty brown-haired woman in her late thirties, with a sparkling smile, and not at all shy. Despite her age she was closer to the twenties' idea of a flapper than her niece Miranda. Ray Hauser smiled obligingly, as if he was used to her demands, and said, "Sure, let's all go for a cruise."

I followed along, feeling just a bit like an outsider. A month earlier I hadn't known any of these people, except for a nodding acquaintance with the Greys. Suddenly I was like one of the family. "Watch your step," Jason Grey instructed, guiding me up the wobbly wooden gangplank. Even on summer vacation he seemed like a slightly stodgy teacher.

I had to admit the houseboat's interior was impressive. A large central room had comfortable chairs and a table, plus a small pot-bellied stove for chilly evenings. There was a galley for preparing light meals, and a smaller room with bunk beds and a closet. "We can sleep four on board," Hauser said, "though we don't take many overnight cruises on Chester Lake."

"What kind of motors do you have?" I asked.

He led me to the stern. "Here—twin outboards. I did most of this work myself, a few years back. Bought a used flat-bottomed barge in Boston and built this on it. Picked the motors myself too. I have to keep extra gasoline on board, and they don't push it very fast, but it's better than being towed everywhere. I figure if you own a houseboat you're not out to break any speed records."

Gretel brought out a bottle of good Canadian whiskey and mixed drinks for everyone. A bit to my surprise, Miranda declined. "I don't think we should be violating the law," she said, and her primness was something new to me.

"Oh, come on," I kidded. "Prohibition is ignored by everyone these days."

"Then it should be repealed, shouldn't it?"

I felt oddly embarrassed disagreeing with her in front of her aunt

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and uncle. Somehow I was too old to be having a lovers' quarrel with this girl just out of college. But I pressed on nevertheless. "Didn't you ever break the law in your whole life?" I asked.

"Oh, everyone's broken the law," Aunt Kitty said, jumping to her defense, trying to soothe things before a real argument developed. "But I can see Miranda's point. She has a principle and she should stick to it."

Hauser changed the subject. "Come on, we'll go out for a little ride."

I helped him start the motors and cast off the lines, and the gingerbread houseboat drifted away from the dock. He'd been right about its slow progress. It took us a good fifteen minutes to cross the lake to the other side. But I was enjoying it, and so was Miranda.

"I'm sorry I kidded you about not drinking," I told her when we were seated alone on the deck. The others were inside, having another round.

"I went through four years of college confronting things like that, Sam. I didn't think I'd have to face it with someone as mature as you."

"You won't, ever again." I took her hand and held it. We'd started back across the lake and the breeze was in our faces. "Too cool for you?"

"No, I like it."

"Your aunt and uncle are fine people, Miranda. I wish I'd known your dad before he died."

"I was only ten when he went off to war," she said, looking away toward the shoreline. "Some day I hope you can meet my mother in Chicago."

"I hope so."

"Wouldn't you like to sail away like this on a boat some day, and just disappear?"

"What do you mean? Like the people on the *Mary Celeste?*"

"Who were they?"

"It's a famous unsolved mystery—I read about it just recently. It seems that back in 1872 a small sailing ship was found adrift in the Atlantic. Though the seas were calm and there was no evidence of damage or violence on board, the captain, his wife and child, and the crew of seven had all vanished. The mystery of what happened to them has never been solved."

"I think I did read about it once."

"I've helped the local sheriff with a few crimes that were every

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bit as strange. Sometime I'll tell you about them."

Kitty came out to join us. "You two all friendly again?"

"Sure," I told her. "Your niece is going to make me stop drinking."

"Good! Maybe we should all stop."

When Hauser docked the houseboat we thanked them for the ride and went ashore. I watched Gretel Hauser go up to their cottage and push open the door. Then Miranda and I followed her aunt and uncle up to their cottage for dinner.

In those days April had started to question me about Miranda. Especially on Monday mornings, after my weekends at Chester Lake, she'd ask, "Any wedding bells in the future, Dr. Sam?"

"Too soon to tell, April. I got called out twice over the weekend for emergencies. Plays havoc with my love life!"

"Come on, now. I think you like doctoring even more than women!"

"Maybe so. Maybe I should find me a woman doctor."

In truth Northmont's new hospital had taken some of the pressure off my weekends. If people couldn't reach me, there was always someone to help them at the hospital. So on Saturday afternoon, seeing my last patient and closing the office for the weekend, I was ready to drive up to Chester Lake and visit the Greys' cottage again.

Miranda met me at the door, and seemed really glad to see me. "Sam, it seems we've been apart forever!"

"It was a busy week at the office. I'd hoped to drive up and surprise you on Wednesday, but Mrs. Rodgers decided to have her baby."

"Come in. Aunt Kitty and Uncle Jason are next door with the Hausers."

"Good. I'd rather be alone with you anyway."

We settled down to flirtatious small talk, and the next half hour passed quickly. It was nearly six o'clock when the screen door opened and Aunt Kitty came in. She was wearing a colorful summer dress and carrying a sweater. "Miranda," she said breathlessly, "your uncle and I are going out on the houseboat with the Hausers. Can you and Sam find yourselves something to eat?"

"Sure, Aunt Kitty."

I glanced out the door and caught a glimpse of Jason's bright red jacket vanishing inside the houseboat. There was no sign of the Hausers. "We'll walk down with you and say hello," I suggested.

Kitty smiled at me. "We'd ask you along, but I'm sure you lovebirds would rather be alone."

Miranda and I strolled along as Kitty hurried nervously out on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the dock and up the gangplank. Ray Hauser came to the ornate latticework door and waved. Then he called to me, "Sam, help me with these mooring lines, will you?"

"Sure thing!" I unhooked the lines and tossed them aboard while Hauser started the engines. I thought I heard Gretel's laugh from somewhere on board, and I imagined they were going out on the lake to do some more drinking—free of Miranda's criticism.

Kitty turned to wave at us once more and then went inside to join the others. Ray Hauser stayed on the deck until finally we waved goodbye and strolled back to the Greys' cottage. "The four of them seem to be getting on well," I said, holding open the screen door.

"Aunt Kitty could get along with anyone, she's so friendly. I am a bit surprised that Uncle Jason likes them too."

I stood at the front window watching the houseboat drift slowly near the middle of the lake. There were no other boats nearby, though a couple of sails could be seen far down at the other end of the water. "Well, they've pretty much got the lake to themselves. Everyone else must be eating dinner."

"Is that a hint, Sam Hawthorne?"

I laughed and tossed a pillow at her. "Unless you'd rather smooch for a bit."

"Oh—*you*!"

She busied herself preparing something to eat, while I continued watching the Hausers' houseboat.

I noticed a pair of binoculars hanging from a hook by the window and tried them out. They were powerful ones, army issue from the war, and I could see the houseboat easily with them. No one was on deck, though I could see Jason's red jacket through the window. "That's odd."

Miranda came up beside me, resting her hand on my back. "What is?"

"The motors are off and they're just drifting."

"They often do that. I think they go out there to drink."

One of the sailboats from the other end of the lake had come up this way, and as I watched, the drifting houseboat seemed to head straight for it. Through the binoculars I saw the man on the sailboat maneuver it away just in time, than stand up to shout and shake his fist as the *Gretel* passed him by.

"Could they all be drunk on there?" I wondered.

"Hardly! They've only been out for fifteen minutes."

"Still . . ." I took the binoculars and went outside, walking out to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the end of the Hausers' dock. As I watched the houseboat turn slowly in the water I could see that no one was steering or controlling it. And there was no sign of any of them.

Miranda came out to join me. "What's the trouble, Sam?"

"I don't like it. There's something wrong. That day we were out Hauser seemed very careful about handling the boat. Today he's just letting it drift."

"They're busy drinking," she scoffed, dismissing my concern.

"Could they all be swimming?"

She shook her head. "My uncle doesn't swim a stroke."

"And there's no sign of them in the water." I lowered the binoculars and glanced over at the Greys' own dock where a little motorboat was tied up. "Let's take a ride out there and see. You're probably right that they're just sitting around with drinks, but I'd feel better taking a look."

"Oh, all right. Let me turn off the stove."

I started the motor with some difficulty and we headed out toward the houseboat. We still had about two hours of daylight and a few more boats were taking advantage of it. None had come near the Hausers' craft, though, except for the sailboat which brushed by it. I said nothing as we approached, but Miranda spoke softly. "It seems deserted. Do you think they're . . . in bed?"

"You stay here. I'll go on board for a look."

I got a grip and boosted myself on board. Glancing through one of the windows I could see Jason Grey's red jacket draped over the back of a chair. The door was unlatched and I stepped inside. Surprisingly, there were no glasses or liquor bottles in evidence. Nothing seemed to be disturbed. I had an awful feeling that Miranda had been right. I would find them in the bunk beds.

But these were empty too, as was the little galley and the toilet. The entire houseboat was empty.

The Greys and the Hausers had vanished, leaving the *Gretel* to drift aimlessly in the center of Chester Lake.

We covered the lake, back and forth, for the next hour. I was certain we'd find swimmers or bodies or something that would furnish a clue, but there was nothing. It was as if the lake, or the sky, had swallowed them up.

"Four people! Miranda, what happened to them?" I was pacing the deck nervously. "It's like another *Mary Celeste!*"

"You're letting your imagination run wild, Sam. I'm sure they'll

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

turn up. Let's tow the houseboat to shore and wait."

We attached a tow line and brought it, with some difficulty, back to the Hausers' dock. The little motorboat wasn't built for that sort of work but somehow we managed. The Hauser cottage was locked and there was no sign that any of them had returned. "I'm going to search the houseboat one more time while it's still daylight," I decided. "Maybe there's a hiding place we missed."

I quickly discovered that the high ceiling of the main room left no space unaccounted for beneath the roof. There was some storage space below the deck, but in the dim light I could find nothing except a half-dozen cans of fuel and some old rags. I checked the narrow closets but they were empty. There were two half-empty bottles in the whiskey cabinet—apparently the same ones we'd used on my earlier visit. A little icebox in the galley was empty. Except for Jason's red jacket there was not a sign that any of them had been on board the *Gretel*.

I came down the gangplank just as the sun was setting. "I think I'd better telephone Sheriff Lens," I said.

"Do you really think that's necessary?"

"They're gone, Miranda. Your aunt and uncle, and the Hausers. And I don't know what happened to them. If they're in the lake we have to get a search party organized."

"I suppose you're right," she admitted reluctantly. "I just can't bring myself to believe any of this. It seems they must be playing a joke on us."

"I hope so. But they've had plenty of time to show up if it is a joke."

Very few of the cottages had telephones, but there was one at the Greys'. I used it to call Sheriff Lens and tell him what had happened.

Chester Lake was nearly 20 miles from Northmont but it was still in the county, and therefore still the province of Sheriff Lens. He responded to my call with two cars full of deputies and townspeople ready to join in the search. Despite the darkness one boatload set out immediately, lighting its way with lanterns, to search the shoreline for washed-up bodies.

"They musta gone swimmin' and got cramps," the sheriff speculated, staring down at the shoreline as the lanterns moved along it in the dark. "We'll find their bodies."

Miranda, who'd stood up amazingly well to all this, shuddered at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his words. She shook her head and argued doggedly, "My uncle doesn't swim. And my aunt is too good a swimmer to drown on a calm lake like this. Besides, Sam was watching the boat through binoculars. He'd have seen them in the water."

"You wasn't watchin' it every minute, was you, Doc? You couldn't see the other side of it now, could you?"

"No," I admitted. "I suppose they could have sneaked off. I suppose a submarine could have surfaced and taken them off the other side when I wasn't looking, but I doubt if that happened. I'll grant you there are ways the four of them could have gotten off that houseboat without attracting attention, but why would they do it? Why would four perfectly normal, sensible, middle-aged people want to disappear and hide from us? It isn't April Fool's Day, you know."

"They'll turn up," Sheriff Lens assured me. He dropped his voice a bit so as not to upset Miranda again. "Or their bodies will."

I stayed up most of the night with the others, until the search parties had covered the entire shoreline. There were no bodies. Around midnight we forced open the door of the Hausers' cottage, searching for a note or clue of some sort, but there was nothing. Everything had been left in perfect order for their return.

Finally, toward dawn, I wakened Miranda long enough to kiss her and say, "I'm going home for some sleep. I'll be back before noon."

It was the sheriff who awakened me a few hours later. I stood aside to let him enter my apartment, at the same instant remembering what he must be there for.

"You've found them!" I said.

"No such luck, Doc. I had people searchin' again first thing this mornin', but there's no sign of them. We went over the houseboat again too."

I sank into a chair, not fully awake yet. "It really is beginning to look like another *Mary Celeste*."

"What's that?"

"A ship that was found in the middle of the ocean, drifting without its crew. No one ever discovered what happened to them."

Sheriff Lens grunted. "Was this recent?"

"No, a long time ago."

"And they never solved it, huh?"

"Something drove the people off the ship, but what? The sea was calm, just as the lake was calm yesterday."

"Could another boat have attacked 'em?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"A ship might have attacked the *Mary Celeste*, though there was no evidence of it. I don't see how another boat could have gotten close to the *Gretel* yesterday without my noticing it."

"Come on, Doc. I'll drive you back up there. Maybe in the daylight we'll get an idea."

"This isn't like the other cases I've helped you with, Sheriff. In the past there's always been a body, or a crime of some sort. This time we just don't know what happened! And there aren't even any suspects—they've all disappeared!"

"All but one. Miranda Grey's still around."

I glanced at him, thinking he must be kidding me, but his face was dead serious. "Miranda was with me the whole time! How could she have caused their disappearance?"

"Don't know *how*, Doc. But I know *why*. The word is that she stands to inherit a tidy sum with her aunt and uncle both dead. They had some stocks that're showing a good profit these days, an' they got no family. I hear that Miranda is the only heir."

I tried to keep my temper under control. "Sheriff, even if that's true, Miranda couldn't collect a cent unless their bodies were found. Otherwise she'd have to wait years for them to be declared legally dead. It makes no sense to suspect her, even if she hadn't been with me all the time. I think you're jumping to the conclusion there's been foul play when all we really know is that they've disappeared."

"Maybe so," Sheriff Lens admitted. "Anyway, let's get goin'. My deputies might have turned something up."

But when we reached the lake it was much as it'd been the previous night. Miranda came running out to meet me, and I thought for an instant she might throw her arms around me. "Have you heard anything?" she demanded of the sheriff.

"Not a thing, Miss. We got more people comin' in today to search the shoreline, an' we're going to start dragging the lake."

"I can't believe they're dead!"

We went through the Hausers' cottage again, searching for anything that might be a clue to the mystery. I examined bills from Boston department stores and a Cape Cod tourist court and even one from a plumbing-supply house, but I came up with nothing.

Sheriff Lens, looking over my shoulder, asked, "What sort of plumbing supplies?"

"A hot-water heater they installed themselves."

He grunted and went on with his own searching. The cottage's tiny rooms yielded nothing, and there was no basement to be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

searched. We trooped back to the place next door more dejected than ever. "There are no clues," I complained to Miranda. "Nothing I can get my teeth into! They're simply gone!"

All afternoon long deputies and other searchers brought back reports, but they always added up to the same thing. No bodies had been washed up on shore and the men in the rowboats with their grappling hooks had snagged nothing but a fisherman's wading boot and a splintered beer keg.

Finally Sheriff Lens said, "Miranda, we should have photographs of your aunt and uncle to send around to the newspapers. Do you have any good ones?"

She thought for a moment, then her face brightened. "Aunt Kitty showed me a picture of them with the Hausers. It was taken last summer at that amusement park down near Winslow."

"Could you find it?"

"I'll see."

She searched around in the Greys' house without success, then suddenly remembered an attic crawlspace that was reached through a trap door in the bedroom ceiling. "They used it for storage," she explained. I stood on a chair and lifted down a cardboard box as she directed. Inside we found a photograph of the four missing people, smiling at the camera and standing before a sign that read *Sea Serpent Ride—1001 Thrills!*

I showed it to the sheriff and he gave a customary grunt. "You think a sea serpent swallowed them up?"

"No. The picture was taken last year at an amusement park. But it's a good likeness of all of them."

He took it and promised to give it to the papers. I noticed that Miranda seemed a bit more cheerful, as if finding the picture had given her renewed confidence that the four of them would be found as well. Maybe she was right. I just didn't know.

Late in the afternoon I telephoned April at home, just in case some patient had been trying to reach me with an emergency. But everything was quiet. "Any sign of the missing people?" she asked.

"Not a trace."

"Dr. Sam, I happened to think of something I read in one of them magazines we got around the office. Don't remember if it was true or not, but it was about people jumping overboard from a motorboat for no reason at all and drowning. Turned out there was a big spider hidden on the boat that came out and scared them into jumping."

"A spider?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"That's right. You think there's something like that hidden on board the *Gretel?*"

"April, it's worth thinking about. Thanks for the tip."

I hung up and went outside, standing there staring at the fancy houseboat and thinking about a horrible creature that might be lurking somewhere inside. I turned and hurried back to the cottage.

"What's up, Doc?" Sheriff Lens asked.

"Sheriff, I need some heavy gloves and a canvas sack. And a flashlight."

"Won't a lantern do?"

"A flashlight would be better. I'll be in cramped quarters."

"On the houseboat?"

"Yes, I'm going on a spider hunt."

The sheriff and Miranda stood on the shore and watched as I boarded the houseboat once more, carrying the flashlight and sack in my gloved hands. I made my way directly to the back of the boat and opened the access door to the storage space in the hull. The gasoline cans and old rags were still there, and at first my slowly moving flashlight picked out nothing else.

But then I saw it, slim and still and very deadly.

I reached out a careful hand, hardly daring to breathe.

Another inch—

I had it, and I placed it carefully in the canvas sack.

"You find somethin'?" Sheriff Lens asked as I came ashore with my prize.

"I found something."

Miranda stared at the sack in my hand, unable to tear her eyes away. "What's in there, Sam?"

"The solution to the mystery. And I'm afraid it isn't a very pleasant solution." I opened the sack carefully and showed them what I'd found. "You see, we had the wrong legend. It wasn't the *Mary Celeste* after all. It was *Hansel and Gretel.*"

The hours that followed were sad and distasteful. There was business to be done at the cottage, and when that was over Sheriff Lens had to find a judge to swear out a warrant. Then we drove half of the night to rendezvous with other law officers at a town hall on Cape Cod.

We reached the tourist court just before dawn. There was enough light already to make out the semicircle of little white cabins grouped around the central kitchen and bathroom facilities. As we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

parked on the road and fanned out across the grass, one officer asked me, "Are you armed, sir?"

"No, I'm just along for the ride."

Saying it, I wondered why I had come all this distance just to see the sad conclusion of a sad story. Then I stood aside as Sheriff Lens pounded on the door. "Police! Open up in there!"

After a few minutes the door of the little tourist cabin opened and a tired face peered out at us in the dawn light. He seemed to recognize me rather than the sheriff. "Hello, Sam," he said quietly. It was Ray Hauser.

"We have a warrant for your arrest," Sheriff Lens announced.

I didn't wait for the rest. I already heard the window squeaking open at the rear of the cabin.

I sprinted around in the direction of the sound and caught her as her feet touched the ground. "I'm sorry," I said. "You didn't make it."

"Oh, Sam—" She collapsed sobbing against my chest as Sheriff Lens came up behind us.

"I have a warrant for your arrest," he intoned, "on two counts of first-degree murder. Do you have anything to say?"

Miranda's Aunt Kitty shook her head. "Take me back," she told us. "I'm ready."

Later, at the local police station where we waited out the legal formalities, I talked with Ray Hauser. He sat handcuffed and grim on a hard wooden bench, occasionally taking a puff from a cigarette someone had given him. "We found their bodies last night," I said. "Your wife Gretel and Kitty's husband Jason, both in the attic crawlspace of your house, where you'd hidden them."

"Yes," he said simply. "You're a smart fellow, Sam. When it didn't work we knew it was only a matter of time, but somehow we were hoping for more time than this."

"When it didn't work," I repeated. "I found it yesterday on the houseboat, and that told me the whole story. We thought it was another *Mary Celeste*, with everyone disappearing from the houseboat, but it was only Hansel and Gretel all over again. Or Jason and Gretel. Remember how the wicked witch tried to bake them in the stove? That was the whole plan. The houseboat wasn't supposed to be found deserted at all—it was supposed to explode and burn and sink. What I found yesterday was a single stick of dynamite with a fuse that had sputtered out before it did its job. Had it gone

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

off as planned, it would have blown a hole below the waterline and ignited those six cans of gasoline you'd stored there. The *Gretel* would have sunk in flames."

"It would have been so simple that way," Hauser said glumly.

"The people from shore, searching for survivors, would have pulled you and Kitty Grey from the water. There'd have been no sign of Jason or your wife Gretel, but their bodies would have washed ashore after a few days. The key to it all, of course, was that Jason and Gretel were never on the houseboat Saturday afternoon. You and Kitty killed them—"

"I did it," he insisted. "Kitty had nothing to do with the actual killings. I gave them a sleeping powder in some whiskey and smothered them. It was supposed to happen on the houseboat, so their bodies would be found soon after the explosion, but Jason drank the whiskey at the cottage and fell asleep. We couldn't carry them onto the boat, so we hid the bodies. After we were rescued we planned to dump the bodies out in the lake in the middle of the night, to be found later."

"It wouldn't have worked, you know. The time of death would have been correct, but an autopsy would have shown neither smoke nor water in their lungs."

"We figured after a few days in the water that wouldn't have mattered. We'd have scorched their clothes to make it look like they'd died in the fire." He took another drag on his cigarette. "Tell me how you know it all, Sam."

Kitty had collapsed and been given a sedative. Though I barely knew Hauser, he seemed to be the one to tell. "There was one thing bothered me from the start. You locked your cottage Saturday, but you hadn't bothered to lock it before when we all went out on the boat. I remember Gretel simply pushing the door open when you returned the day I was along. That got me wondering if the disappearance and the locked cottage were connected. Wondering if you'd planned to disappear all along, or if there was something in the cottage you didn't want found.

I remembered the gasoline cans on the houseboat—far more than you'd need for extra fuel. I went searching and found the dynamite with its scorched fuse, and then I knew. We never actually saw Gretel or Jason board the boat. I caught a glimpse of Jason's red coat, which you could have been wearing. I thought I heard Gretel's laugh, but it could have been Kitty. We had only Kitty's word, and your word, that they were aboard when you cast off.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Kitty was nervous and breathless when she told us you were all on the boat—not surprising since she'd just seen the murders committed. Jason and Gretel were already dead, hidden in your cottage crawlspace. We missed the trap door when we searched your cottage, because we weren't looking for it. But I knew it had to be there because the Greys' cottage had one and the two cottages were identical."

Hauser stubbed out his cigarette. "I lit the fuse and we went into the water on the side away from the cottage, in case you were watching. When the boat didn't explode we swam to the opposite shore. I had to steal a car." He made it sound like the worst thing they'd done.

"Miranda told me Kitty was a good swimmer. But why didn't you just get back on the houseboat?"

"Kitty was still afraid it might explode any minute. Besides we couldn't have explained the absence of our spouses."

I nodded. "You and Kitty—the handsome man and the flapper. A better pair than the stuffy teacher and the overweight Gretel. I can understand your attraction to each other, but did it have to cause murder?"

He lifted his sad eyes to mine. "You have to realize we're deeply in love. We did this for love."

"For love and a bit of money too, I imagine. Gretel referred to it that first day as her money, and Jason had made money in the market. You and Kitty had to kill them both to inherit it from both sides, and a staged accident was the safest way to do that."

"I told you she had nothing to do with killing them."

"You never lifted their bodies into that attic crawlspace by yourself. She must have helped you with that part, at least."

He didn't even argue the point. "How'd you find us at the tourist court?"

"I figured you two ran away after the boat failed to explode. The question was where. It wouldn't be too close because you had to know the bodies would be found within a few days, when the odor became noticeable. I remembered a bill I came across from the tourist court. You'd gone there once, and maybe you'd gone there again. The sheriff phoned and they confirmed there was a couple fitting your description. You know the rest."

He shook his head sadly. "I don't know the rest. What happens to us now?"

But that was for a judge and jury to answer. Four months later

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Hauser was found guilty and sentenced to life in prison. Kitty was never brought to trial. She hanged herself with a torn bedsheet in her cell.

"You're wondering what happened with Miranda and me?" Dr. Sam Hawthorne concluded, pouring himself another drink from the bottle. "Well, that's another story—another mystery, really. It involved a strange happening at the Northmont post office on the very day of the big stock-market crash. But I'd better save that one for next time."

NEXT MONTH...

Special Issue!

40th Anniversary!

5 superb novelets—ALL NEW—including

MICHAEL GILBERT (about Calder and Behrens)

EDWARD D. HOCH (about Nick Velvet)

RUTH RENDELL (about thornapple)

SIMON BRETT (about the Nuggy Bar)

ERNEST SAVAGE (about Sam Train)

and 4 new short stories

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classified MARKET PLACE

ELLERY QUEEN — published 13 times a year. CLASSIFIED AD rate is $1.00 per word — payable in advance — ($15.00 minimum). Capitalized words 40¢ per word additional. To be included in the next issue please send order and remittance to R. S. Wayner, Classified Ad Director, DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC., 380 Lexington Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

ADDITIONAL INCOME

EARN while learning to create prosperity, freedom and peace. Details $1.00. Commonsense Books, Box 287-D2, Bedford, MA 01730.

ACCOUNTING & TAX SERVICE

LEARN Simple Method of Preparing your 1980 Taxes. Brochure $2.00. P.O. Box 308, Lawndale, CA 90260.

AUTHOR'S SERVICE

TYPING, typesetting: fast, accuracy guaranteed, from 75¢/page. Dancing Digits, 120 Melrose Street, Rochester, NY 14619.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS

LARGE Catalog Free! Mystery-suspense books: Save to 70%. Spencer Books, P.O. Box 15665, Santa Ana, CA 92705.

FREE CATALOGUES, hardbacks, paperbacks. Search Service. Detective Mystery Booksearch, Box 15460, Orlando, Florida, 3.808.

SEND NOW for the book that shocked the nation! "Biggest Con Game Exposed!" "Have More Time, Money and Fun!" included! Send $5.00 to: Taylor Enterprises, Box 6322, Pensacola, FL 32503.

WHERE DID THAT BULLET GO? "The Key to the Assassination of JFK." $3.70, THE KEY, P.O. Box 534, Bronx, NY 10462.

FREE List! Used hardcover mystery detective fiction. Dunn's Mysteries, 251 Baldwin Avenue, Meriden, CT 06450.

WORLD'S largest mystery specialist (30,000 volumes). No obligation search service. Send $2 for next 4 catalogues. Aardvarks Book Detectives, P.O. Box 15070, Orlando, FL 32858.

DETECTIVE Pulps (Shadow, etc.), Magazines, Hardcover Books, Science Fiction, James Bond, Playboys, T.V. Guides, The Avengers, Comic Books, Giveaways, Sunday Comic Sections, Movie Merchandise, etc. 1900-1980. Catalogues 75¢. Rogofsky, Box DP1102, Flushing, New York 11354.

JUST PULP, The Magazine of Popular Fiction. Mystery, Suspense, Fantasy, Humor; the best of everything. Copy $2.00 postpaid. P.O. Box 243A, Narragansett, RI 02882.

BOOKS—Recent & Out Of Print. G & M Books, Pine Hill, Ogunquit, ME 03907.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS—Cont'd

LOVE a Mystery? Free Mystery-Detective book list. Mystery-House, Box 4235, Reading, PA 19606.

SEND 25¢ for LIST of MYSTERY & DETECTIVE FICTION. CANFORD, Drawer 216E Freeville, NY 13068.

ENJOY EXCITING Golden-Era Mystery, Sci-Fi, Detective, etc. Radio Programs in your Car, Home, Anywhere. Inexpensive Cassettes/Cartridges. Make Unique Gifts! Sample and Catalog $3.49. Catalog $1.00. "FUN-TAPE," 412 Redbud, Oxford, MS 38655.

MAKE MONEY WRITING! Sell your stories and articles! Learn from a published author everything you need to know to be a money making writer. Order Writing Is A Money Making Art; Fiction or Non-Fiction. Send $5.95 each to Anatoms Publishing, Box 614, Birmingham, MI 48012.

BUYING Pre-1960 Paperback Collections. Especially Mystery. Manesis, 615 East Gorham #5, Madison, Wisconsin 53703.

SF, Mysteries, British, American, Canadian. Free Catalog of Hardcovers, Paperbacks, Magazines. Pandora's, Box 86, Neche, ND 58265.

PULP Reprints. Books on Doc Savage, The Shadow. Write Odyssey, Box G-148-eq, Greenwood, MA 01880.

PUBLISHERS' OVERSTOCKS. BARGAIN BOOKS. 2,000 titles, all subjects! Free catalog: Hamilton, 98-27 Clapboard, Danbury, CT 06810.

PAST IMPERFECT: Joan Collins' sizzling biography. Available only from BOOKS INTERNATIONAL, Box 523, Southampton, Bermuda. $3.95 Postpaid.

MYSTERIES. Our first catalog used hardcovers, free. W. R. Loewenthal, 507 Fifth Avenue, NYC 10017.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

FREE CATALOG. Business opportunity books and moneymaking reports. Bacon, Dept, 11, Wolf, WY 82844.

$600.00 WEEKLY MAILING CIRCULARS! Fantastic New Guaranteed Program! Free Proof: Sunrise, Box 2096-DF, Niagara Falls, NY 14301.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classfied Continued

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

HUNDREDS WEEKLY Stuffing Envelopes!! Free Supplies, Stamps!! Information: Rush stamped envelope! Rynex-CQ, Burnt Hills, NY 12027.

$1200.00 MONTHLY ASSEMBLING PUZZLES at home!!! Start now. No experience required. Valuable free information. Send self-addressed stamped envelope. Careers, Box 225-WCBR, Concord CA 94522.

$500 per 1000 envelopes stuffed according to instructions. Free details: Runnel, Box 456, Fairview, OR 97024.

EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

UNIVERSITY DEGREES BY MAIL! Bachelors, Masters, Ph.D.s . . . Free revealing details. Counseling, Box 389-EQ-2 Tustin, CA 92680.

ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

REPAIR Electric Motors! Alternators! Generators! Build Equipment! Illustrated Instructions Available! Modelectric, Box 7266, Kansas City, MO 64113.

FOR SALE—MISCELLANEOUS

OWNERS of radio, TV sets . . . Stop annoyance of noisy or intermittent volume controls, station selectors, switches, many others —with miracle low-cost method anyone can use. No need for costly replacements. $2.00. Value Methods, Box 91103, Cleveland, OH 44101.

GOVERNMENT SURPLUS

JEEPS $19.30! — CARS $13.50! — 650,000 ITEMS! — GOVERNMENT SURPLUS — MOST COMPREHENSIVE DIRECTORY AVAILABLE TELLS HOW, WHERE TO BUY — YOUR AREA — $2 — MONEYBACK GUARANTEE—"GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES." DEPARTMENT E-1, BOX 99249, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94109.

HOBBIES & COLLECTIONS

GREAT SCIENCE FICTION SHOWS from radio's golden era. On cassettes, fine sound, moderately priced. Free list. Rare Radio, Dept. M, Box 117, Sunland, CA 91040.

HYPNOTISM

FREE Fascinating Hypnosis Information! Startling! DLMH, Box 487 Anaheim, CA 92805.

INVENTIONS WANTED

MANUFACTURER Seeking Patented or Unpatented Inventions. Advantek International, 1100 17th NW, Washington, DC 20036.

INVENTIONS WANTED—Cont'd

INVENTIONS, patents, wanted cash, royalty. Auto, electro-mechanical, mechanical devices, Housewares, etc. We develop, finance, manufacture and market from an idea to perfected product. Free evaluation and brochure. Request Kit DP, Pixonic Corporation, 22 Walter Street, Pearl River, NY 10965.

LOANS BY MAIL

CASH Loans, Never Repay. Free Details. Dept. B, Box 135, Scottsbluff, NB 69361.

BORROW $25,000 "OVERNIGHT." Any purpose. Keep indefinitely! Free Report! Success Research, Box 29070-SM, Indianapolis, IN 46229.

"BORROW by mail! Signature loans. No collateral! Free Details! Write MBG-DPC-181, Box 22298, Sandusky OH 44870."

THE ARABS HAVE MILLIONS to Loan, Invest. (Not Iranian) Free Details. Arab-DC, 935 Main, Vidor, TX 77662.

QUICK $CASH$ SIGNATURE LOANS! Advise amount & purpose. Details Free. ELITE, Box 2298, Sandusky, OH 44870."

BORROW $1,000-$50,000 secretly — "overnight." Anyone! Credit unimportant. Repay anytime. Incredibly low interest. No interviews, collateral, co-signers. Unique "Financier's Plan." Full information, $2 (refundable). Spectrum, 79 Wall St.-16, New York 10005.

GET Cash grants—from Government. (Never repay.) Also, cash loans available. All ages eligible. Complete information, $2 (refundable). Surplus Funds-DG, 1629 K St., Washington, DC 20006.

MEMORY IMPROVEMENT

INSTANT MEMORY . . . NEW WAY TO REMEMBER. No memorization. Release your PHOTOGRAPHIC memory. Stop forgetting! FREE information. Institute of Advanced Thinking, 845DP, ViaLapaz, Pacific Palisades, CA 90272.

MISCELLANEOUS

FULL COURSE VEGETARIAN MEXICAN DINNER. Send $2.00 with self addressed stamped envelope to: L.B. Sherby, 117 North First, Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

SAVE! Fabulous Gems For Jewelry, Collecting! Gemcutter to You! Details Free. Taylor's, 113-A Martin, Indian Harbor Beach, FL 32937.

MEET sincere, beautiful people—like YOU. Very low fees. Call DATELINE toll-free: 800-451-3245.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Classified Continued

MISCELLANEOUS—Cont'd

OLDTIME Radio programs on quality tapes. Free catalogue. Carl D. Froehlich, Rte. One, New Freedom, PA 17349.

OWN an original Fairy Stone Cross. $3.00 to Freeman, Rt. 2, Box 13A, Axton, VA 24054.

TIRED LOSING! Reverse the odds. Easy. Proven Method. No Gimmick. Complete Details. $2.00 + SASE. A. B. Kelley, Box 42, Coulter, PA 15028.

"HOW TO WIN CONTESTS" report . . . $2.00 . . . The Book Barrow, Box 624-EQ, Novato, CA 94948.

HOMEMAKERS: Have the HOUSEKEEPING BLAHS? Need ideas to put zip into housework? Send $1 and SASE to: Personal Potentials, P.O. Box 96, Dept. Q-H1, Brewster, Ohio 44613.

DAVE'S POST CARD RECIPE CLUB. Sample Recipe, Membership information. Send $2.00 to P.O. Box 93, Pine, CO 80407.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

COLLECT names. Guaranteed weekly income. Free supplies. CMO, Box 171-CB, Natalia, TX 78059.

BECOME a Self-Publisher and make Big Profits. Free Details. FIE-DPC181, Box 2133, Sandusky, Ohio 44870.

EARN Big Money Collecting Names! Easy Work! Start Immediately! Write: Day, 104-HH Third, Salem, MO 65560.

$300 WEEKLY SPARE TIME—Mailing Sales-letters. Details: Delta, Dept.-D, Box 2902-CRS, Rock Hill, SC 29730.

$60.00/Hundred Stuffing Envelopes (per instructions)!! Offer-details: Worldwide-P 460, X15940, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33318.

$80/100 Stuffing, Mailing Envelopes. No Limit. Free Details. Greenwood Publications, Box 776(DP), Tualatin, OR 97062.

SUPER Tips for Winning Contests. Send $3.00 to MAJAN, Dept. ec-1, P.O. Box 17573, San Diego, CA 92117. California residents add 6% sales tax.

"HOW To Make $1000 Per Week Selling Recipes By Mail!" Free Book! ERA 939-12, Box 24426, Jacksonville, FL 32217.

$90,000 in 8 weeks. Guaranteed. Send self addressed stamped envelope to: Gary J. Strand, 1579 Orchard Ave., Boulder, CO 80302.

SECRETS for Successful Garage Sales. Send $3.00 today to MAJAN, P.O. Box 17573, Dept. eg-1, San Diego, CA 92117. California residents add 6% sales tax.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

EARN $50.00 per hundred, stuffing envelopes. Free Details, Reply, "Homeworkers-D." Box 94688, Schaumburg, IL 60194.

"105 WAYS TO MAKE MONEY AT HOME." Send $2 to Bacon, Dept. 12, Wolf, WY 82844.

HUNDREDS $$$$$ WEEKLY STUFFING ENVELOPES! GUARANTEED PROGRAM. Send stamped envelope: NuWay, Box 24949, Nashville, TN 37202.

PERSONAL

HAVE CONFIDENTIAL CHICAGO MAILING ADDRESS or branch office. Business, Personal; Since 1944! Mail Center, 323(g) Franklin, Chicago 60606.

UNIVERSITY DEGREES BY MAIL! Bachelors, Masters, Ph.D.s . . . Free revealing details. Counseling, Box 389-DP2, Tustin, CA 92680.

POOR MAN'S GOULASH . . . money, time saving gourmet recipe . . . $1.00 . . . GOULASH, Box 625-EQ, Novato, CA 94948.

$1000 $AVING$ PLAN. End your money worries. Send $3.00 Today . . . Bonus. GARDYK, Box 281A, South Milwaukee, WI 53172.

PROFITABLE OCCUPATIONS

DIAMOND Brokers earn big profits. Requires $250 investment. Free details. Diamonds Unlimited, Box 4348, University Park, NM 88003.

RADIO & TELEVISION

IMPROVE TV reception. My copyrighted antenna installation manual tells how. $3.00. Besesparis, Box 1128E, Lake Worth, Florida 33460.

RECORDS, TAPES & SOUND EQUIPMENT

FREE Promotional albums, concert tickets, stereos, etc. Information: Barry Publications, 477 82nd Street, Brooklyn, NY 11209.

RUBBER STAMPS

FREE! Illustrated Catalog. Hundreds of Stock Cuts, etc. Send 50¢ postage. Applicable first order. Kingsborough-EQ, 1571 W. 11th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11204.

SONGWRITERS

POEMS WANTED. Songs Recorded For Radio Promotions. Pageant Records, Box 7416-DA, Sarasota, FL 33578.

STAMP COLLECTING

STAMP Collecting For Fun And Profit. $2.00. D. Babineau, Box 124, Biddeford, ME 04005.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

What do you like best about a mystery?

- ☐ the challenge of "whodunit"?
- ☐ creaking doors and things that go bump in the night?
- ☐ steadily mounting suspense?
- ☐ a touch of the macabre...the thrill of the chase...spy vs. counter spy?
- ☐ the sudden twist of plot and a quick surprise ending?

It's all here! in ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Enjoy a variety of chills and challenges every month with up to 13 new spine tinglers in the Hitchcock tradition. Get regular short stories and novelettes by today's top authors—Edward D. Hoch, Jack Ritchie, William Bankier, Nedra Tyre, John Lutz, Robert Twohy and many more.

And start with this money-wise introductory offer!

Special New Subscriber Offer

AHMM • Box 2640 • Greenwich, CT 06836

Send me AHMM at the rate checked below.

☐ Special—6 issues at $6.97!

☐ *Double the value* with 12 issues at $13.94!

Outside U.S.A. and possessions: 6 issues—$8.00 12 issues—$16.00

☐ Payment of $_____enclosed. ☐ Bill me later.

☐ Charge to my ☐ VISA ☐ Master Charge

Card # _____ Expiration Date: _____

Your Signature: _____

(Only the 12 issues for $13.94 offer can be charged to your bank cards.)

Your name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Allow 6-8 weeks for delivery of first copy.

Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine

H1ABRD

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Eberhart, Gardner, Christie, MacDonald, Cleary, Simenon, etc. 12 of their best $1.

Now, as an introductory offer, you can get 12 full-length novels, including some of the finest mystery writing to appear in recent years, for only $1.00.

You'll meet some of the greatest detectives who ever trapped a killer: Miss Marple, Hercule Poirot, Travis McGee, Chief Superintendent Maigret, Perry Mason and others. You'll get involved in some of their most intriguing cases including: Nemesis, Halloween Party, A Purple Place for Dying, Maigret and the Apparition, The Case of the Postponed Murder. And that's just the beginning ... see the complete list on the back cover.

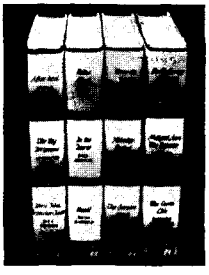
These spine-tingling mysteries cost $82.95 in their publishers' editions. But you can get all 12 of them, in four handsome hardbound triple-volumes, for only $1 as your introduction to The Detective Book Club.

As a member, you'll get, free, the club's monthly Preview, which describes in advance each month's selections. They're chosen by the club's editors, who select the best from more than 400 mysteries published each year. You may reject any volume before or after receiving it; there is no minimum number of books you must buy. And you may cancel your membership at any time.

When you accept a club selection, you get three complete, full length detective novels in one hardcover triple-volume like the ones shown on this page for only $6.39. That's at least a $5 saving per mystery if you were to buy them separately in the publishers' original editions.

Recent selections have included new thrillers by top names like those featured above, plus Len Deighton, Dick Francis, and many others. Start enjoying the benefits of membership in The Detective Book Club. Send no money now. You'll be billed later for your 12 mysteries. Send the coupon today to: The Detective Book Club, Roslyn, N.Y. 11576.

FILL OUT COUPON. CLIP ALONG DOTTED LINE—THEN MAIL.



The Detective Book Club, Roslyn, N.Y. 11576.

Please enroll me as a member and send me at once my four triple volumes shown here, containing twelve mysteries. I enclose no money now. I may examine my books for one week, then will either accept all four volumes for the special new member price of only $1 plus shipping or return them and owe nothing.

As a member, I will receive free the club's monthly Preview which describes my next selections, but I am not obligated to accept them. I will always have at least ten days to reject any volume by returning the form provided. I may return any book at the club's expense for full credit. For each monthly triple-volume I keep, I will send you only $6.39, plus shipping. I understand I may cancel my membership at any time.

Name _____

1-MD

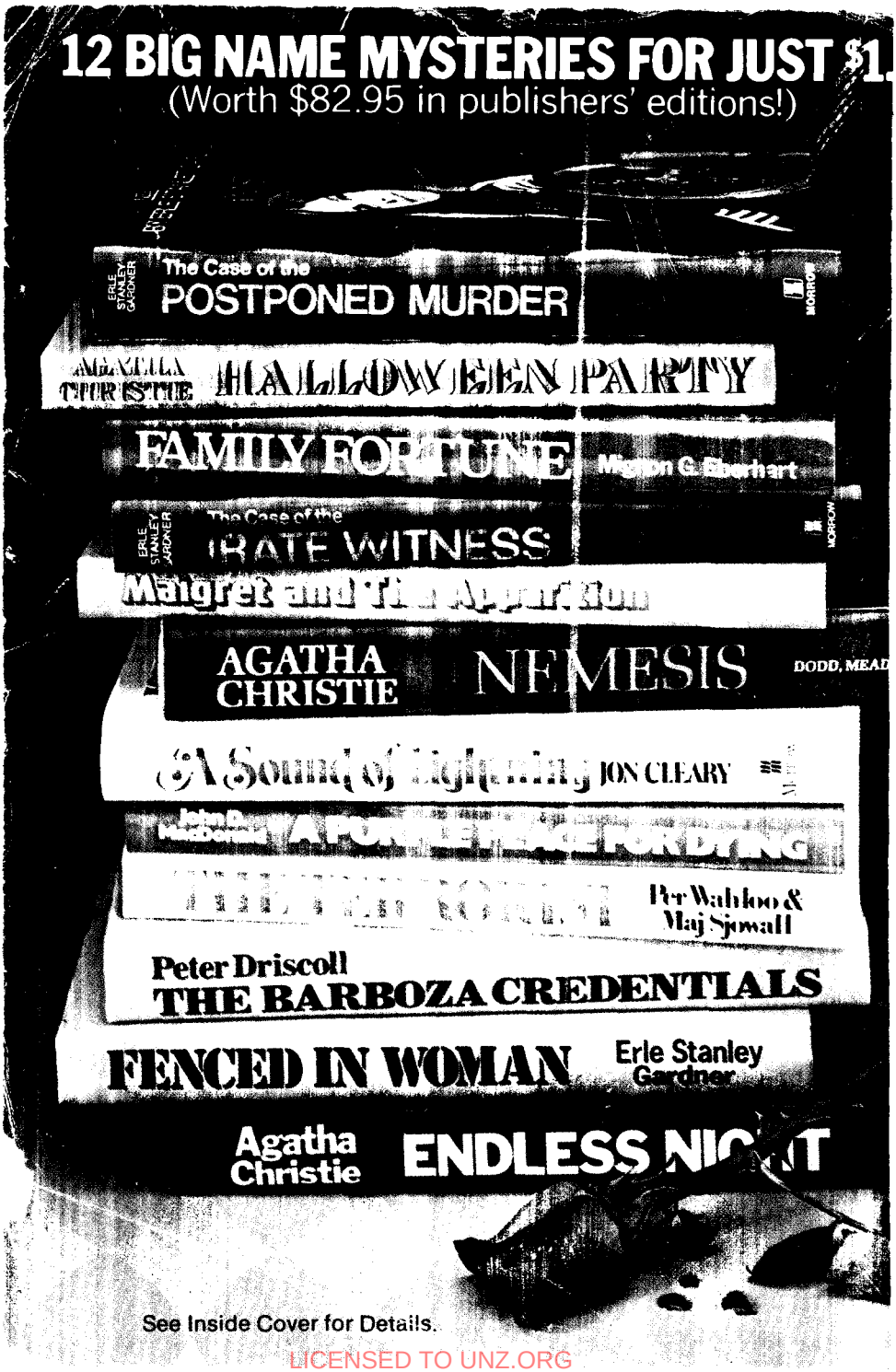
Street _____

D19L3E

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Note: Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. Canadian members will be served from Ontario, offer slightly different in Canada.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED